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Social, Personal and Health Education Policy

Introductory Statement:

This policy on SPHE was reviewed and updated by all staff in the school year 2022/23

Rationale:

- To foster the personal development, health and well-being of all the children in our care.
- To help create and maintain positive and supportive relationships.
- To help pupils to become active and responsible members of society.
- To help develop a framework of values, attitudes and skills which will enable pupils to make informed and responsible choices now and in the future.
- To benefit the teaching and learning experiences of the S.P.H.E Curriculum.
- To conform to the principles of learning outlined in the Primary School Curriculum.

Vision:

Coolick NS values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. We recognize that SPHE is intrinsic in the learning and teaching that occurs both formally and informally in the school and in the classroom. Through our SPHE program we wish to assist children develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The program encourages children to be aware of their rights as individuals while at the same time accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and the wider community. Parents have the primary role in the Social, Personal and Health Education of their children so their involvement will be encouraged as much as possible.

Aims:

- We endorse the aims of Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum for Primary Schools:
- To promote the personal development and well-being of the child.
- To foster, in the child, a sense of care and respect (for himself/herself) and others and an appreciation of the dignity of every human being.
- To promote the health of the child and provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects.
- To enable the child to make informed decisions and choices about the social, personal and health dimensions of life both now and in the future.

- To develop in the child a sense of social responsibility, a commitment to active and participative citizenship and an appreciation of the democratic way of life.
- To enable the child to respect human and cultural diversity and to appreciate and understand the interdependent nature of the world.

Curriculum Planning

Strands and Strand Units:

SPHE is planned so that children receive a comprehensive program over a two-year cycle. Teachers have allocated strand units from each of the strands to each class. This ensures that the strand units not covered in Year One are included in the program of work for the following year. In some cases, it may be necessary to revise specific objectives from the previous year. Since SPHE is spiral in nature we will cover the following content at each level throughout the school over a two-year period.

Content of SPHE Curriculum over 2 years.

<i>Strands</i>	<i>Strand Units (Year 1)</i>	<i>Strand Units (Year 2)</i>
	<i>J. Infants/1st/3rd/5th</i>	<i>S. Infants/2nd/4th/6th</i>
Myself	Self-Identity (Sept/Oct)	
	Taking care of my body (Nov/Dec)	
	Growing and Changing (Mar/April)	
		Safety and Protection (Jan/Feb)
		Making decisions 3 rd -6 th (Nov/Dec)
Myself and Others	Myself and my family (Jan/Feb)	
		My friends and other people (Sept/Oct)
		Relating to others (Mar/April)
Myself and the wider world	Developing citizenship (May/June)	
		Media Education (May/June)
1/2nd	Zippy's Friends Programme	
5th/6th	Friends for Life Programme.	
6th class Term 2 (where possible)	RSE Programme with possible health specialists.	Stay Safe Programme

**Please note Junior Infants to 2nd Class 'Making decisions' is incorporated in the strand unit 'Self Identity' and from 3rd class up 'Making decisions' is a Strand Unit.*

*** The Stay Safe Programme is covered in Year 2 but the Stay Safe lessons based on the topics of 'Friendship and Bullying' and 'Touches' will be revised in Year 1 of the plan also.*

Please note; The school year 2022/23 is Year Two.

Contexts for SPHE:

SPHE will be taught through a combination of contexts:

- Positive School Climate and Atmosphere.
- Discrete Time.
- Integration with other subject areas.

Positive School Climate and Atmosphere:

At the first staff meeting of the year all members of the school community are reminded of the importance of promoting a positive school climate. These key messages dealing with school climate and atmosphere are also referred to, as appropriate, at meetings with parents, at assembly and on a regular basis in classes.

Our key messages are:

We cater for the individual needs of the children. Individual needs may be social, emotional, spiritual, physical or intellectual. Through assessment, observation and discussion with parents we strive to identify and meet individual needs.

We provide opportunities to enhance the self-esteem of all members of the school-community.

The staff is aware that their role in helping children to develop their self-esteem is to create an environment within the school that is as positive as possible for all concerned. The five building blocks of self-esteem, as outlined in the curriculum, have been adopted as our approach to self-esteem development. They are:

- A sense of identity.
- A sense of belonging
- A sense of security.
- A sense of purpose
- A sense of competence

We aim to actively value diversity and to priorities inclusive and respectful language. We will priorities both racial and gender equality and respect for those with special needs. We believe that children learn to respect themselves and others through experiencing respect in their own lives and through witnessing respect being shown to others.

We work to develop an effective communication system within the school and between the school and home. Attention will be paid to encouraging everyone to express opinions and concerns and to respond to the opinions and concerns of others as a dimension of classroom work and general school life.

We support a health promoting physical environment. Emphasis on healthy lunches, healthy lifestyle, road safety, water safety, farm safety and fire drills are some of the areas promoted. Taking responsibility and pride in the school environment is encouraged through constant review and promotion of behavior and habits required for maintaining a clean environment. Playground activities and children's work on display throughout school promote a healthy physical environment.

We promote democratic processes in all levels of school life while balancing roles, rights and responsibilities. Children experience and practice the democratic process by:

- Negotiating the class rules at the start of the year.
- Promoting support and co-operation.
- Respecting individual strengths.
- Supporting individual needs through teacher support
- Supporting individual needs of children in times of family or individual personal crises (children who suffer serious illness and need to be in hospital or out of school for long periods; children who suffer bereavement, especially bereavement in the immediate family; engaging exterior services e.g., NEPs, CAMHS, Barnardos, Rainbows to assist in this difficult area).

Discrete Time:

SPHE may be timetabled for 30 mins per week, one hour per fortnight or blocks of 1-2 hours per month where feasible or appropriate. Children who are withdrawn for supplementary teaching must be included for as much of the SPHE program as possible. This discrete time is used to develop and practice particular skills, deal with sensitive issues or explore issues that are not addressed in other areas of the curriculum.

Integration:

At each class level, teachers should seek to integrate SPHE with other curricular areas. Many aspects of SPHE can be dealt with in the context of English, Gaelige, SESE, Visual Arts and Drama. Teachers have identified the objectives that can be acquired through cross-curricular work.

Approaches and Methodologies:

Teachers are in agreement that active learning is the principal learning and teaching approach used in the SPHE program. The following active learning strategies are promoted for SPHE:

- Drama activities.
- Co-operative games.
- Pictures, photographs and visual images.
- Discussion: in pairs, small groups, with the whole class.
- Written activities: surveys, questionnaires, lists, check-lists, projects, worksheets.
- Media Studies.
- Use of external speakers/visitors who are specialists in their own fields.
- Circle time
- Other strategies as devised by the class teacher.

Assessment

Children's progress in SPHE is assessed mainly through:

Teacher observation:

- The ability of the child to co-operate and work in groups or to work independently

- The informal interactions between the child and adults and between the child and other children
- Physical and emotional maturity
- The quality of presentation of work
- The participation and interest of the child in a variety of activities.

Teacher-designed tests and tasks:

- SPHE includes areas of knowledge and understanding that will need to be assessed at regular intervals. Specific tasks can be used to ascertain a child's ability to apply particular skills in different situations.

Portfolios and Projects:

- Teachers may decide that children will keep personal folders of their work.

Self-Assessment by Children:

- Children are encouraged to engage in assessing their own progress in SPHE and to reflect on their learning.

Children with different needs:

The SPHE program aims to meet the needs of all children in the school. This will be achieved by teachers varying the pace, content and methodologies to ensure learning for all pupils. Evidence of this differentiated approach will be recorded in teacher's planning documentation. The requirements of children with special needs will be taken into consideration when planning class lessons and related activities. Members of the Learning Support Team and Resource Teachers will positively support the work of the class teacher. The SNA supports particular children or groups as directed by the class teacher. Children who experience bereavement or loss, serious illness or other major personal situations are supported and consideration is given to meeting their individual needs in the most appropriate manner.

Equality of Participation and Access:

We view the SPHE program as playing a key role in ensuring equality of opportunities for all children. The program at each class level will be flexible so that the learning requirements of all children may be addressed. We provide an equal educational experience for both boys and girls as we recognize that stereotyped expectations of gender roles can inhibit children's educational achievements. Children with special needs will be included in all activities. Diversity within our school community will be recognized by valuing and promoting the needs, interests, skills and talents of members of the Traveling Community, children with special needs and international children.

Policies and programs that support SPHE:

SPHE links with other policies/programs used in the school- Walk Tall, Acceptable Use Policy Stay Safe program, RSE program, Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, Admissions Policy, Attendance, Code of behavior and Anti-Bullying Policy, Health and Safety and Healthy Eating policies. Teachers are expected to be familiar with these policies and ensure that the school's agreed policy is followed when addressing these issues.

Review

The policy will be reviewed as the need arises and as necessary. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

This plan was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on the 13th of June 2023

Ciara Irwin Foley
Chairperson of Board of Management
Date: 13/06/2023

Gearóid O Sullivan
Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management
Date: 13/06/2023

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Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy on RSE was reviewed and updated by all staff in the school year 2020/21. Staff recognise that Parents and Guardians have the primary responsibility for education their children in sexual matters. The school RSE programme acts only as a support to parents, and parents retain the right to withdraw their children from classes.

This policy is cognisant of all aspects of our current Child Protection Policy. The school follows the DES child protection guidelines and has a child protection policy with the Principal as Designated Liaison person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal as the Deputy DLP. Where a child protection concern is raised, the procedures outlined in the schools Child Protection Policy will be followed.

School Ethos

Coolick School is a catholic school and therefore all policies developed are implemented in ways which are keeping with the ethos of the school. The ethos of the school is characterised by the following:

- Sensitive to reality of our children's lives in a changing world
- Mutual respect between all partners in education
- Child- centred.
- Aims to ensure each child reaches full potential in the holistic sense.
- Hopes that children are equipped with high self-esteem to enable them to go to live happy and fulfilled lives.

Definition of RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) aims to provide opportunities for children and young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides opportunities for pupils to learn basic personal and social skills which foster integrity, self-confidence and self-esteem while nurturing sensitivity to the feelings and rights of others.

Current Provision Included in the school curriculum is:

- SPHE
- Stay safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Religious Education
- External speaker may be invited to speak to the pupils

Aims of our RSE Programme

- To help you people develop healthy friendships and relationships
- To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and relationships
- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child
- To foster and understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in moral, spiritual and social framework
- To understand the physical changes taking place with the onset of puberty – Senior Classes
- To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.
- To enable the child to be comfortable with sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing.

Policies which support SPHE/RSE

- Code of behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Admissions Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy

In keeping with the sentiment and spirit of these policies, we support informally many of the aims on which RSE is modelled. We encourage good behaviour, open communications, understanding and tolerance of differences, and respect for self and others. We recognise that both pupils and staff have rights and responsibilities in our school. A sense of responsibility is fostered and attention is paid to the wellbeing of all of the members of the school community.

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in our School

Curriculum Matters

- Curriculum Content – The curriculum by NCCA will be followed as published and will be taught from Junior Infants to sixth class. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and the policy. Each class teacher will teach the content for their class level.
- Where an outside speaker is used, the class teacher will remain in the classroom. The speaker will be made aware of the school's RSE policy.

Topics covered up to 2nd Class include:

- Keeping Safe
- Bodily changes during grown and birth (birth to 9)
- Making age-appropriate choices
- Appreciating family life
- Recognising and expressing feelings

- Self-care, hygiene, diet, exercise and sleep
- Expressing opinions and listening to others
- Naming the parts of the male / female body using anatomical terms (Junior / Senior infants)
- Naming the parts of the male / female body using anatomical terms and identify some of their functions (1st / 2nd)

Topics from 3rd to Sixth include:

- Bodily changes
- Healthy eating, personal hygiene, exercise
- Keeping Safe
- Expressing feelings
- Family relationships
- Discuss the stages and sequence of development of the human baby in the womb (*fourth class*)
- Changes that occur in boys and girls with the onset of puberty (*fifth and Sixth class*)
- Reproductive system of male / Female adults (*fifth and Sixth class*)
- Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth within the context of a committed loving relationship (*Fifth and Sixth Class*)

Parents will be informed when the sensitive lessons of the RSE programme are due to be taught. This will typically occur in Term 2

Organisational Matters:

- Parents will be informed in advance of lessons on the sensitive areas of the RSE programme.
- If parents do not give consent for their child to participate in any aspect of the RSE programme they must give a notice in writing to the school that they are withdrawing their child.
- Parents have a responsibility to become involved, to inform themselves of the program content and to prepare children for the information they will acquire around the sensitive areas and discuss areas covered in RSE/SPHE. Parents are invited / welcome to view the curriculum and may speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns.
- In the class situation children will be encouraged to recognise that certain information is for them only and it would be inappropriate to discuss this with younger siblings/children for example.
- With regard to matters of confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom. Should a child who is withdrawn from the sexually sensitive lessons receive inappropriate information from others outside these classes, it will be the responsibility of the parents / Guardians to address the issues.
- If a Teacher has concerns about teaching the “sexually sensitive issues” in RSE, the teacher should consult with the Principal. Any teacher has the right to opt out of teaching the “sensitive parts” of RSE. It is the responsibility of the B.O.M. to ensure content is covered by another teacher or an outside speaker.
- Children with SEN – Taking into account the pupil’s social and emotional development, instruction will be based on individual needs where possible. Parents will be consulted around sensitive issues.

Dealing with Questions:

It is natural that children should wish to ask question in the area of RSE. However, this area is treated somewhat differently from other subjects due to its sensitive nature.

All questions answered will reflect the parameters of the curriculum. Certain topics are not part of the primary RSE/SPHE programme and will not be discussed i.e.: abortion, masturbation, homosexuality, contraception.

Questions to the teacher may be oral or written within the group setting and answered within boundaries of the curriculum and school policy. If any questions asked by children are deemed to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the child to their parents /guardians, or state that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum.

The school cannot guarantee confidentiality if a child asks a question of a personal nature or discloses personal information.

At all times the child's and teacher's right to privacy will be maintained.

Children's question's will be dealt with, taking into account the following criteria, when relevant.

- By being aware of circumstances in which the question has arisen
- By clarifying what information is required
- By deciding if the issue is relevant/who it is relevant to
- By giving an age-appropriate answer
- By deferring the question as one which will be answered in the next lesson, one which should be answered at home or one which will be answered mor fully in the future.

General Points

Coolick National School fosters a culture that is accepting of difference.

An integral part of RSE is learning to respect others; this will include respect for families or individuals who are different from the majority.

The Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004 provide protection against discrimination on nine grounds, one of which is sexual orientation. The Acts oblige those who manage schools to protect students and staff from discrimination or sexual harassment.

If children are using the word 'gay' in a negative fashion it is better not to ignore it in the hope that it will go away. The same advice would apply for any instance of bullying.

We have the following strategy for responding to children who have questions about sexual orientation or who are taunting others in a negative fashion about being gay. This is done in the context of the school's ethos and RSE policy and with the awareness that primary school children may be too young to engage in any detailed discussion of sexual identity.

Responding to Children Who Have Questions About Sexual Orientation or Who Are Taunting Others in a Negative Fashion About Being Gay.

Depending on the context and the age group of the children, the teacher could ask a child or a class group what they mean by the word 'gay'.

The general response we would give: ‘The majority of people are attracted to people of the opposite gender. This is called being heterosexual. Some people are attracted to people of the same gender. This is called being homosexual or gay.’

By giving factual information like this in an open and straightforward method we may help to remove the secrecy which is necessary for bullying to flourish.

Homophobic insults will be treated in exactly the same way as racist or other insults – the teacher will calmly explain to the child that such insults are hurtful to the other person and are not acceptable in Coolick NS.

If a pupil persists in homophobic insults despite being told it is hurtful, they will be subject to the current Code of Behavior and Anti-bullying policy of Coolick National School.

Guidelines for Management: Parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children in sexual matters. The school’s R.S.E. program acts as a support to parents, and parents retain the right to withdraw their children from classes. The program is taught within the ethos of the school and contemporary issues/topics are dealt with by the teacher at a level appropriate to the age and stage of development of pupils within a moral and spiritual framework. Teachers are present at all times when guest speakers are visiting a class.

Child Protection:

The school follows the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and has a Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment in place with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person and the Deputy Principal as the Deputy Designated Liaison Person. In cases of disclosure the DLP or Deputy DLP will follow the procedures as set out in Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and the school’s Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment

Parental Involvement

- Parents are welcome to view the curriculum and resources if they wish.
- Parents will be informed in advance when formal lessons on the sensitive areas of the programme will be asked to discuss these issues with their child prior to the lessons in school. Include letter as an Appendix?
- Use of the home/school links pages accompanying such lessons in the RSE Resource books
- The Parents Association may on occasion arrange for speakers/meetings to help them in the task of communicating with their children on aspects of their development.

Resources

- Lesson plans from the DES Resource Material for Relationships and Sexuality Education. Each class teacher has a copy of the appropriate manual.
- The Stay Safe programme, www.staysafe.ie
- The Walk Tall programme.
- Busy Bodies DVD and booklet. This DVD and booklet were developed to support the teaching of the 5th and 6th class component of RSE within the context of SPHE. It is available for download at www.healthpromotion.ie

- All resources are available for parents/guardians to view if they so request prior to the delivery of the lesson.

Provision for Ongoing Support

- Parents are welcome to view policy and resources if they wish.
- Opportunities provided by our Education Centre will be brought to the attention of staff members

Review

The policy will be reviewed as the need arises and as necessary. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

This plan was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on the 13th of June 2023

Ciara Irwin Foley
Chairperson of Board of Management
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Stay Safe Program

The Stay Safe program is a personal safety skills program for primary schools. It aims to reduce vulnerability to child abuse and bullying. It helps to develop children's ability to recognize, resist and report situations of risk or abusive encounters. The Stay Safe program is taught in Year Two of our SPHE policy. Aspects of the program such as bullying are taught in all classes as necessary and typically every year.

Stay Safe is a mandatory resource and must be used. All primary schools must fully implement the Stay Safe Programme as advised in the DES circular 65/2011 and Child Protection Guidelines

The objectives of the program are:

- To help children to identify and express safe and unsafe feelings.
- To teach children safety skills for dealing with common unsafe situations such as getting lost.
- To encourage children to value friendships and to teach them skills for making and keeping friends.
- To teach children safety strategies for dealing with bullying.
- To teach children that it is not acceptable to bully others.
- To encourage children to value and enjoy normal affection.
- To teach children how to deal with an unsafe or inappropriate touch.
- To teach the rule: 'Never keep secrets about touching'.
- To help children recognize the difference between a good secret and a bad secret.
- To help children identify the adults they could talk about a bad secret and to give them the opportunity to practice telling.
- To clarify for the children who strangers are.
- To give the children safety strategies for dealing appropriately with strangers.

Content:

The lessons cover the following topics:

- Feeling Safe and Unsafe
- Friendship and Bullying
- Touches
- Secrets and Telling

- Strangers

Children participating in this program will learn:

- To distinguish between safe and unsafe feelings
- What to do if lost
- What to do if the phone or doorbell rings when they are alone in the house
- The importance of friends in children's lives
- What to do if bullied
- Stay Safe Rules: Say No/ Get Away/ Tell
- Why not to bully others
- Appreciating normal, appropriate touches
- That unsafe touches should never be kept secret
- How to respond to inappropriate touches (Stay Safe Rules)
- Good and bad secret
- That some secrets should not be kept
- Who and how to tell if in trouble
- About strangers and safety strategies

Parental Concerns:

If parents are concerned about the more sensitive aspects of the Stay Safe program, they are welcome to visit the school to view the curriculum and discuss their concerns with the Principal. If parent's wish to withdraw their children from specific classes they must request to do so in writing. Teachers will inform parents when the Stay Safe Programme will be taught.

A teacher who is concerned about teaching a particular topic within the Stay Safe program should talk to the principal about his/her concerns. Such concerns will be handled discreetly. The Principal will endeavor to accommodate such teachers.

Resources outside the school profession will be availed of if considered appropriate.

Resources

Resources to support the provision of SPHE will include the curriculum statement and teacher guidelines from the Department of Education and Skills, text books, DVD s, ICT, the internet, programs which target specific issues and guest speakers.

Guest Speakers:

For some topics such as nutrition, oral health care, hygiene, RSE, etc. we may occasionally avail of external personnel to enhance the learning that is ongoing in the classroom. Before the visit the teacher must agree with the visitor the aims and objectives of the lesson(s) to be covered and a detailed discussion of the content to be delivered will also take place.

Individual Teachers Planning and Reporting:

The SPHE Curriculum Documents will inform the planning of content, approaches and methodologies employed by individual teachers. Coverage of the strand units each year will be as outlined in this plan. The recording of work done in teacher's notes will help to monitor progress and assist in future planning.

Community Links:

We value the contribution which members of the local community can make towards furthering the aims and objectives of SPHE in our school. The community Garda, medical persons, people of other cultures and backgrounds, members of local community groups and the media have much to offer in supporting the SPHE program. We will avail of the services of statutory bodies such as the HSE and An Garda Síochana, as required. Personnel from these agencies have been invited and have already participated in staff-training and awareness programs along with parents, school coaches.

Implementation:

This plan has been formulated by the staff of our school. It will be supported, developed and implemented by teaching and non-teaching staff members alike. The school principal will coordinate its progression.

Review

The policy will be reviewed as the need arises and as necessary. Parents and staff will be informed of any amendments made.

This plan was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on the 13th of June 2023

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