

## **ARDSCOIL RÍ, LIMERICK**

### **Social, Personal and Health Education/Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy**

#### **1.Mission Statement**

Ardcoil Ris aims to promote the spiritual, personal, physical, cultural, aesthetic and academic development of its students. It aims to create a community where students are imbued with Christian values of respect, justice and integrity. We encourage students to become involved in a variety of activities outside the curriculum. Life skills are reinforced through participation in such activities as music, debating, quizzes, work experience programmes, enterprise, foreign exchange, drama, concerts, charitable fundraising and Gaisce

#### **2.Rationale**

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a programme that provides students with the unique opportunity to develop the skills and competencies to learn about themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives, and social development.

##### **(a) The Aims of SPHE:**

Building on the aims of SPHE in the primary school, at post-primary level SPHE aims:

- To enable the students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities.
- To promote self-esteem and self-confidence.
- To enable students to develop a framework for responsible decision making.
- To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.
- To promote physical, mental and emotional health and well-being.

We see these aims as contributing towards the school's commitment to nurturing the Christian values of respect, justice and integrity in all aspects of school life and to fostering the holistic development of the students in our care.

The school recognises that the home is the natural environment where children grow, develop and mature into adults. However, it also accepts as stated in paragraph 9 sub section(d) of the Education Act 1998, its own role in supporting parents in this work and in fostering the social, moral, spiritual and personal development of the students. Our commitment to the development of the student community is evident in the many examples of activities and support structures (Appendix 1) provided in Ardscoil Rís. SPHE builds on this commitment.

### **(b) Programme Content**

The curriculum for S.P.H.E. is presented in ten modules. The Department of Education and Science recognises that each school has flexibility within this framework to plan the SPHE Programme most suitable for the students and the school.

### **(c) The Ten Modules are:**

- Belonging and Integrating.
- Self-management: a sense of purpose
- Communication Skills
- Physical Health
- Friendship
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Emotional Health
- Influences and Decisions
- Substance Use
- Personal Safety

Detailed Junior Cycle programme Appendix 2 and Transition Year Programme Appendix 3

## **3.Methodology**

As the SPHE programme is primarily skills based, teaching methods should be of an experiential nature with an emphasis on discussion reflection and classroom participation. These teaching methods are child centred and must be appropriate to the age and stage of development of the student. The class atmosphere needs to be one of respect for the privacy of each individual student and hallmarked by sensitivity and care.

SPHE is timetabled for one period a week for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years. Provision for SPHE in Transition year is subject to the TYO Programme.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a compulsory at Junior and Senior Cycle. It is included as one module of SPHE in Junior Cycle and as part of Religious Education in Senior Cycle (c/f Appendix 4).

#### **4. Staff Development, Training, and Resource Issues:**

The Board of Management will endeavour to provide the necessary resources to support the programme on an ongoing basis. The role of the SPHE co-ordinator is seen as vital to a meaningful SPHE Programme. School management will encourage and facilitate teachers to attend relevant in-service training for the continued development of the SPHE Programme.

#### **5. Classroom Issues**

##### **(a) Participation**

SPHE is a core curricular subject on the Junior Cycle Curriculum. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is one module of the programme. Each parent has the right to withdraw their child from some or all RSE classes but parents are encouraged to provide alternative RSE at home. The school will respect this choice. It will be necessary for parents of any student opting out of RSE to make suitable arrangements with the school principal for the welfare of their child at these times. Where students are withdrawn from RSE the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students. **Parents wishing to withdraw their sons from RSE must inform the Principal in writing of their decision in September of each year, otherwise the students will take part in the RSE classes.**

##### **(b) Sensitive Issues**

Class discussion will be of a general nature, and will not be personally focused, in accordance with the class ground rules. (See Appendix 5 for sample ground rules). Inappropriate questions will not be answered by a teacher in class. The SPHE teacher may exercise his or her own professional judgement in deciding whether to answer the question privately after the class has finished. This must be done in harmony with the ethos of the school. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the Guidance Counsellor, the Principal or the Deputy Principal without identifying the pupil in the first instance.

### **(c) Confidentiality**

While an atmosphere of trust is pre-requisite of SPHE class, the following limits of confidentiality must be observed. These limits are:

1. Child abuse: i) Physical, ii) Emotional, iii) Sexual, iv) Neglect.
2. Intention to harm self or others
3. Substance misuse
4. Underage sexual intercourse

SPHE teachers should inform students of these limits at the beginning of the year and where possible before making a disclosure

### **(d) Referral**

While it is acknowledged that teachers have a professional responsibility to impart the SPHE course content, the personal, social and emotional needs of our students are responded to in a caring and supportive manner. Where it is appropriate, the teacher may refer students to other supportive links within the school. As far as possible this should be done in negotiation with the student. The teacher should inform the class of external services relevant to the class material. This should be done within the context of the Ardscoil Rís ethos. SPHE teachers, where in doubt as to a course of action, are encouraged to discuss the issue with a senior member of staff without identifying the student in the first instance.

## **6.Visitors**

Visiting speakers are seen as complimenting and supporting the SPHE programme in the school. Teachers inviting these speakers must:

1. Inform the Principal in advance
2. Make the speaker aware of the SPHE Policy and the ethos of the school
3. Agree the content of the presentation
4. Do preparatory and follow up work where possible
5. Under normal circumstances remain with the class group during the visit

## **6.How the Policy will be Circulated**

An outline of the programme (Appendix 2) and sections 3 and 5 of the policy will be given to parents of incoming students. They will be informed that they may view the entire policy on request. Students will be informed through their SPHE class.

This policy will be available for all staff in the school by its inclusion with the Policy documents. Copies will be given to each SPHE teacher.

## **7.Review and Evaluation**

The SPHE programme will be reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis by the SPHE team. The opinions of the students will be included as part of this review.

The SPHE policy will be reviewed in line with the school's programme of School Development Planning.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Examples of activities and support structures in the school:**

- Year Heads
- Pastoral Care Team
- Students Council
- Parents Council
- Career Guidance / Counselling
- Induction Programmes, Transition and Leaving Cert Year Graduation
- Mentoring
- Learning Support
- L.C.V.P. Programme
- Transition Year Programme
- Games/Sport
- Music
- School Tours
- Retreats
- Immersion Programme (India)
- Encounter Programme
- Horizon Programme
- Edmund Rice Awards
- Public Speaking/Debating
- Enterprise Education
- Supervised Study

This is not a definitive list.

### **Policies that Support the Holistic Development of the Student:**

Substance Use Policy

Pastoral Care Policy

Code of Conduct

Anti-Bullying Policy

Student Council Policy

Critical Incident Policy

## **Appendix 4**

### **12. Development of themes at Senior Cycle**

#### **12.1 Human growth and development**

- understanding the structure and function of sex organs
- awareness of fertility
- awareness of the importance and methods of family planning
- understanding of pregnancy and the development of the foetus
- appreciation of the importance of health care during pregnancy
- recognising the range of human emotions and ways to deal with these
- an understanding of the relationship between safe sexual practice and sexually transmitted diseases with particular reference to HIV/AIDS

#### **12.2 Human sexuality**

- understanding of what it means to be male or female
- consideration of male and female roles in relationships and in society
- awareness and understanding of sexual orientations
- exploration of some of the issues pertaining to equality
- understanding the concept of sexual harassment and its different forms
- awareness of sexual abuse and rape, including legal issues and the identification of help agencies in these areas
- skills for making choices about sexual activity
- exploration of the range of attitudes, values and beliefs regarding sexual behaviour in modern society

#### **12.3 Human relationships**

- understanding the nature of peer pressure
- developing skills for resolving conflict
- development of an awareness of the complex nature of love and loving relationships
- understanding marriage as a loving commitment
- deeper awareness of the importance of family life

## Appendix 5: EXAMPLE OF GROUND RULES/CLASS CONTRACT

### WE AGREE THAT THESE ARE THE WAYS IN WHICH WE CAN WORK FOR THE SUCCESS OF THIS GROUP

**\*Confidentiality:** Personal details which may be revealed in the class are not discussed outside the group. I can talk about my learning in the class, the material being covered and the activities we are doing.

**Responsibility:** I will take responsibility for my own sharing and make **I STATEMENTS**. I will share responsibility for the progress of the class group.

**Freedom:** I have the freedom to opt out or pass in discussions.

**Participation:** I will participate and not dominate.

**Listening:** I will listen when another person is speaking.

**Respect:** I will respect others' views even when they are different from mine.

**Request:** If I want something I will ask for it.

**Time-keeping:** I will keep to the allotted time for the task.

**Materials:** I will bring the materials needed for the class and complete any home task so that the group can progress to the next stage of the learning.

**Punctuality:** I will be punctual.

**SIGNED** \_\_\_\_\_

The teacher and students have their own individual signed copy of the Ground Rules/Class Contract that they have drawn up and agreed on together. These will be referred to at various stages as the group progresses.

**\*Teachers should not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality. It should be explained to students that in some circumstances the teacher may need to seek advice on an issue raised in class or to tell someone what has been revealed in class.** In addition, teachers will need to be sensitive to the privacy of family circumstances and will need to draw clear boundaries for all discussions. Students need to be made aware of the importance of their own privacy, and the privacy of their family.

