

SPHE POLICY
DONABATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



This Policy is to be reviewed by the Board of Management every three years.

This Policy was agreed on:

24/02/2026

Signature:

[Handwritten Signature]

(Chairperson to the Board of Management)

Donabate Community College

Donabate Community College is a post primary college, which opened in August 2008 under the Patronage of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). The college is co-educational and aspires towards excellence in a caring and supportive environment. The Board of Management is committed to the successful implementation of recent legislation, in particular the Education Act (1998), the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) and the Equal Status Act (2000). The Board fully subscribes to the principles of partnership, accountability, transparency, inclusion and respect for diversity, parental choice and equality.

College Mission

The Board of Management will promote Excellence. Our aim will be to create, with the assistance of parents/guardians, responsible citizens with pride in their community. The development of the whole person will be based on personal responsibility, inter dependence, respect for people and respect for property. Our college will seek to instil integrity, value discipline and punctuality and facilitate the best in academic and non-academic areas. We will value our culture, our tradition, be inclusive of religious beliefs and will seek to be a caring and compassionate community where justice and truth will be the central elements.

Policy Review and Ratification

Donabate Community College is committed to ongoing policy review to ensure clarity, relevance, and compliance with current legislation and best practices. Where amendments to a policy are of a minor or administrative nature and do not alter its overall meaning, purpose, or intent, the school may proceed to seek ratification from the Board of Management without further consultation with stakeholders. However, where substantive changes are proposed that impact the policy's intent, scope, or application, appropriate consultation with relevant stakeholders will be undertaken before submission to the Board of Management for ratification.

DEFINITION OF SPHE

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

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 the 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

With such support, students may be enabled to participate as active and responsible adults in the personal and social dimensions of society and to make responsible decisions that respect their own dignity and others. There is a growing recognition the social, personal and health education offered to our students is as important as any other area of the curriculum.

The aims of SPHE curriculum contribute to the overall mission statement of our college in promoting the development of the whole person.

CLASS ORGANISATION AND TIMETABLING

Circular M11/03 and SPHE Specification 2023

All second level schools must timetable Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) as part of the Junior Cycle Core Curriculum from September 2003. The time allocation recommended is the equivalent of one class period per week.

Circular 0037/201

All second level schools must implement Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) as an element of SPHE at Junior Cycle and as an RSE programme in Senior Cycle, even in the absence of a timetabled SPHE class.

2nd and 3rd year are timetabled one class per week. 1st year students are timetabled for two SPHE periods per week. Students receive SPHE classes in their dedicated class tutor groups.

Senior Cycle students receive two classes of RSE per week for 8 weeks each year (on a rotational basis).

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

For learning activities to be meaningful, relevant and achievable for all students, it is important that the teacher finds ways to respond to student's diversity by using differentiated approaches and methodologies. In consultation with the AEN Coordinator the following strategies will be used:

- Ensuring that the objectives are realistic for students and ensuring that the learning task is compatible with prior learning
- Providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups
- Spending more time on tasks and organising the learning task into small stages
- Ensuring that language is pitched at the student's level of understanding and does not hinder understanding of the activity
- Posing key questions to guide students through the different stages/processes and to assist in self direction
- Using graphic symbols as reminders to assist students in understanding the sequence/steps in any given task/problem
- Modelling by talking through the steps of a task as it is being done
- Having short and varied tasks
- Creating a learning environment through the use of concrete and where possible everyday materials
- Displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures.

CONTENT AND TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

Through participation in the SPHE Programme the student will encounter a wide range of issues through a variety of experiences. These issues will be addressed in ten modules, each of which appears in each year of the three-year cycle. The emphasis will be on building skills, understanding, attitudes and values important in all these areas.

The units of Learning are:

1st Year:

1. Taking Control and Managing Yourself
2. Making Connections
3. Taking Care of Yourself Online and in Real Life
4. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)
5. Making Healthy Choices

2nd Year:

1. Understanding Myself and Others
2. Mind and Body Wellbeing

3. Staying Safe Online and in Person
4. RSE
5. Making Healthy Choices

3rd Year:

1. Understanding Myself
2. Looking After My Mind and Body
3. Understanding Substance Abuse
4. RSE
5. Exam Preparation

SPHE is primarily skills based and so teaching methods must be of an experiential nature with the emphasis on discussion, reflection and classroom participation. These teaching methods will be student centered and appropriate to the age and development of the student. The class atmosphere must be one of respect and privacy of the individual teacher and student hallmarked by sensitivity and care. A respectful code of conduct is expected from all participants. Every class establishes ground rules, which are referred to throughout the lessons.

Teaching Methodologies may include:

- Group work
- Roleplay
- Brainstorming
- Icebreakers
- Simulation
- Narrative expression
- Debating
- Project work
- Art work
- Multi-media materials
- Case studies
- Visiting speakers

CROSS CURRICULAR LINKS

The following subject areas form the cross curricular links with the SPHE Programme:

- Physical Education (PE)
- Science
- Religious Education (RE)
- Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE)
- Digital Media Literacy

- Identity, Multi-Belief and Values Education (IMBVE)

Resources include:

- Syllabus and Department Guidelines
- You've Got This textbook
- HSE resources
- Belong to Stand Up
- Body Whys
- Powerpoints and Worksheets

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND SUBJECT DEVELOPMENT

The current SPHE Coordinators are: Lillian McGrotty and Gemma Peat

It is the aim that all SPHE teachers will have undertaken introduction to SPHE and RSE in-service training.

All staff have attended Children First in-service training when they joined DCC.

All staff completed Restorative Practice Training in September 2025. Restorative Practice is a relationship-centred approach where students and staff are encouraged to build healthy, respectful relationships, communicate openly and understand how their actions affect others.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND REFERRALS

PARTICIPATION

Each parent has a right to withdraw their child from some or all RSE classes. The school will respect this choice as their right. Parents must contact the school in writing to withdraw their child from the RSE module. It will be necessary for parents opting out of RSE to make suitable arrangements with the school management for students to sign out of the school during those class periods.

Where students are withdrawn for RSE the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students.

Information on the content of the RSE course and SPHE course are found in the Guidance section of our website.

SENSITIVE ISSUES

Class discussion will be of a general nature, and will not be personally directed, in accordance with the previously agreed class ground rules. Inappropriate questions will not

be answered by the class teacher, or from student to student. Only questions directly pertinent to the lesson content will be addressed in class. The SPHE teacher may also exercise his or her own professional judgement in checking whether to answer the question privately after the class has finished. All students are regularly reminded of the limits of confidentiality in relation to Child Protection. Should a teacher be concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the Guidance Counsellor or the Principal without identifying the student and if necessary, make a referral to the Designated Liaison Person.

REFERRAL

Where it is appropriate, the teacher may refer students to other supportive links within the school or external links relevant to the class material. As far as possible this should be done in negotiation with the student.

SPHE teachers in doubt as to a course of action, are encouraged to discuss the issue with the Guidance Counsellor or the Principal without identifying the student.

CONFIDENTIALITY

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

- Child abuse-physical, emotional, sexual, neglect
- Intention to harm self or others
- Substance misuse
- Underage sexual intercourse

Any disclosure will be reported to the Designated Liaison Person in compliance with the Child Protection Policy.

SPHE teachers will inform students of the limits of confidentiality at the beginning of the year, remind them at necessary points throughout the year and where possible before making a disclosure.

VISITORS

The qualified classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with student and that he/she can have a powerful impact on influencing student attitudes, values and behaviour in all aspects of health education Well-being in ("Health literacy in schools", World Health Organisation, 2020)

Research findings indicate that the following teaching approaches have limited effect and are counterproductive to the effective implementation of SPHE:

- Scare tactics and sensationalist interventions
- Testimonials
- Information only interventions
- Short term/once off interventions

("Scaring young people about substance use won't work", Irish Times 21st Feb 2017)

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

- Seek permission from the Principal in advance of inviting a speaker in
- Make the speaker aware of the Mission Statement and SPHE Policy of Donabate Community College
- Agree the content of the presentation
- Do preparatory and follow up work where possible
- Remain with the class group during the visit

PARENTS

The school will strive to keep parents informed of the contents of the SPHE Programme.

The SPHE Policy will be available online at www.donabatecc.ie and notifications regarding reviews are also published on our website. Parents of incoming first years are directed to the SPHE Policy along with other relevant policies.

WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR SPHE

While specific teachers are trained and charged with the responsibility of delivering the programme, all our staff will promote SPHE in their subject areas in so far as that he/she may from time to time see opportunities to promote healthy lifestyle and encourage responsible and mature decisions making. There is generally a whole school approach to key areas of SPHE and the school year has times earmarked when certain topics or issues are covered e.g. Mental Health Week, Wellbeing Days.

REVIEW AND EVALUATION

The SPHE course is never static and must be examined and evaluated regularly and adapted to the needs of the students. The SPHE programmes and policy will be reviewed and evaluated at least every two years by the SPHE team.