

St. Francis Xavier Senior School



Whole School Plan for  
SPHE

## School Ethos Statement

St. Francis Xavier Senior School is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. Our ethos is rooted in the values of respect, care, inclusion, compassion and responsibility. As a school community, we aim to nurture the whole child—spiritually, emotionally, socially, physically and academically.

Our SPHE programme reflects the Core Values central to our ethos while welcoming and respecting pupils of all faiths and none. The programme supports each child in becoming confident, resilient and responsible, and promotes the dignity and wellbeing of every individual.

## Introduction

This whole-school SPHE policy was collaboratively developed by the staff of St. Francis Xavier SNS in consultation with the Board of Management and parent representatives. It reflects the current national SPHE curriculum (*DES 1999*), updates from the *NCCA SPHE Toolkit*, *Wellbeing Framework*, *Flourish (RSE)*, *Webwise* guidelines, and best practice in Irish primary schools in 2025.

## Rationale for SPHE

SPHE is a key element of the holistic development of children. Through SPHE, pupils learn essential life skills that enable them to:

- Build healthy and supportive relationships.
- Develop self-awareness, resilience and emotional wellbeing.
- Make responsible and informed decisions.
- Promote and protect their health and safety.
- Contribute positively to their home, school, parish and wider community.

SPHE is central to the creation of a safe, respectful and inclusive school environment.

## Aims of SPHE

St. Francis Xavier SNS aims to:

- Support the personal development and wellbeing of every child.
- Nurture respect, empathy, kindness and responsibility.
- Promote physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing.
- Enable pupils to make informed decisions based on positive values.
- Foster active and responsible citizenship.
- Encourage appreciation of diversity within the school and the wider world.

## Broad Objectives

Through the SPHE curriculum, children will be enabled to:

- Develop self-confidence and a positive sense of identity.
- Build and maintain healthy relationships.
- Understand human growth and development appropriately.
- Communicate effectively, manage conflict and work cooperatively.
- Make safe and responsible choices in physical and online environments.
- Understand rights, responsibilities and democratic processes.
- Respect diversity and value inclusion.
- Care for the environment and act for sustainability.

## Curriculum Overview

SPHE is organised into three strands:

1. **Myself**
2. **Myself and Others**
3. **Myself and the Wider World**

A **two-year cycle** is used to ensure balanced coverage of all strands while supporting a whole-school approach to wellbeing.

### **Curriculum Planning:**

The following table is an overview of the content for our school over two years.

	<b>Strand Units (Year 1)</b>	<b>Strand Units (Year2)</b>
<b>Myself</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-identity (September/October)</li><li>• Taking care of my body (November/December)</li><li>• Growing &amp; changing (March/April)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safety &amp; protection (January/February)</li><li>• Making decisions (November/December)</li></ul>
<b>Myself &amp; others</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Myself &amp; my family (January/February)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• My friends &amp; other people (September/October)</li><li>• Relating to others (March/April)</li></ul>
<b>Myself &amp; The Wider World</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developing citizenship (May/June)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Media education (May/June)</li></ul>

### **Contexts for SPHE:**

SPHE will be taught in a variety of contexts:

- Positive school atmosphere and climate
- Discrete time
- Integration with other subject areas

### **Discrete Time:**

Based on the Primary Curriculum Framework 2023, SPHE and PE fall under the category of Wellbeing Education, and may be time-tabled for 3 hours per week. This can be divided flexibly between the two subjects. This is particularly important for any sensitive issues or those that are not addressed in other areas of the curriculum e.g. Stay Safe, Relationships & Sexuality Education and Healthy Eating lessons etc. Teachers should endeavour to plan so that children going for supplementary teaching in Learning Support or Resource are also accommodated as far as possible in these lessons. Integration: At each class level teachers will seek to integrate SPHE with other curricular areas. Some aspects of SPHE can be dealt with in the context of relevant subject areas.

### **Approaches and Methodologies:**

Active learning is central to the SPHE programme and the recommended approach for teaching and learning. This can be promoted through the following:

- Drama activities
- Co-operative games

- Discussion-pairs, small groups or with whole class
- Written activities: worksheets, questionnaires, lists/checklists, surveys and projects
- ICT
- Media studies
- Problem-solving
- Collaborative learning
- Use of the environment

The school may adjust this cycle to support specific wellbeing initiatives or emerging needs.

## Teaching Approaches

SPHE is delivered through:

### A. A Positive School Climate

- Respectful relationships
- A safe and inclusive learning environment
- Promotion of school values
- Pupils' voice encouraged and respected

### B. Discrete SPHE Lessons:

- At least **30 minutes weekly**, covering sensitive content, skill development and structured lessons.

### C. Integrated Learning

SPHE regularly links with:

- Religion
- PE
- SESE
- Digital Learning
- Wellbeing & whole-school events (Friendship Month, Cyber Safety Week, Active Schools, Green Schools)

### Active Learning Methodologies

- Circle time
- Discussion and collaborative work
- Role-play and drama
- Picture-books and storytelling
- Digital citizenship activities
- Reflection and journaling
- Cooperative games

## Assessment

Assessment is primarily formative and includes:

- Teacher observations
- Checklists and anecdotal records
- Pupil self-assessment
- Creative tasks
- SPHE copy, as a record of lessons covered

Assessment focuses on understanding, skills and participation rather than written outcomes.

## Inclusion and Differentiation

SPHE is adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. Strategies include:

- Use of visual supports
- Adjusted language or simplified instructions
- Additional time or scaffolding
- Support from SET where necessary

The programme respects all family backgrounds, cultures and identities, in line with school ethos and national guidelines.

## Equality of Access and Participation

Our school is committed to ensuring equal access to SPHE learning for all pupils, regardless of:

- Cultural or linguistic background
- Additional learning needs
- Gender identity or expression
- Family structure
- Socio-economic background

This is aligned with our Core Values.

## Supporting Policies, Programmes & Events

### School Policies Supporting SPHE

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- RSE Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Admissions Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Internet AUP
- Wellbeing Framework Guidelines

### Programmes/Initiatives Used

- Stay Safe Programme
- RSE / *Flourish* (Catholic schools)
- Walk Tall
- Webwise Digital Safety Lessons
- Busy Bodies (HSE)
- Active Schools
- Green Schools
- Wellbeing Programme
- Friendship Month & Cyber Safety Week

## Homework

SPHE homework, when assigned, is reflective and discussion-based. It reinforces class learning and supports home-school partnership.

## Resources

Key resources include:

- PDST SPHE Resource Bank
- Walk Tall Manuals
- Stay Safe Programme
- Flourish (RSE)
- Busy Bodies materials
- Webwise Digital Citizenship resources
- NCCA SPHE Toolkit

## Teacher Planning & Recording

- Teachers prepare long-term and short-term plans in line with this policy.
- SPHE content taught is recorded in the *Cuntas Míosúil*.

## Staff Development

Teachers are supported through ongoing CPD in:

- Oide based training.
- Child safeguarding
- SPHE and wellbeing methodologies
- RSE and Flourish
- Digital safety and citizenship
- Behaviour and inclusion

## Parental Involvement

SPHE is most effective where home and school work together. Parents:

- Are informed annually of RSE content
- Have access to this policy on the school website
- Are encouraged to support wellbeing at home

## Community Links

The school works collaboratively with:

- Community Gardaí
- Local wellbeing organisations
- Parish community

These supports enrich pupils' learning in SPHE.

## Success Criteria

This policy will be considered effective if:

- Pupils demonstrate improved emotional awareness and wellbeing
- Positive behaviour and relationships are evident
- Active participation in SPHE lessons is observed
- Feedback from teachers, parents and pupils is positive
- Whole-school initiatives support wellbeing

## Implementation, Ratification and Communication


The Board of Management of St. Francis Xavier Senior School drew up this policy in 2012. Revised by the **SPHE Co-ordinator: Mrs. Sinéad Gill (Acting up AP2), Staff and the BOM December 2025**. This plan will be reviewed by **December 2028**, or earlier if required due to curriculum developments.

The SPHE Whole School Plan is communicated to Staff via the shared drive and Aladdin.

Signed:

  
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 3/12/25

  
Principal

Date: 03.12.2025