



Riverview ETNS SPHE Policy - reviewed June 2025

Introductory Statement

The original whole school plan for SPHE was developed by school staff during the 2018/2019 school year. Many developments have taken place since then and this plan has required a review and revision based on school experiences and in line with the new curriculum. This plan will form the basis of each teacher's long and short term planning in SPHE and so will influence teaching and learning in individual classrooms. It will also inform new or temporary teachers of our approaches and methodologies in this subject area.

Rationale

The staff of Riverview ETNS acknowledge the importance of S.P.H.E. SPHE is being taught to all classes here in Riverview ETNS with the aid of different resources and initiatives such as Stay Safe, Walk Tall and Relationships and Sexuality Education. SPHE is also taught through integration with other subjects, especially Learn Together. Through SPHE, we seek to develop positive self-esteem, social and communication skills, appropriate expression of feelings, and safety and protection skills in each child in our care. The opportunity to develop these skills will be provided through a structured programme.

This plan was drafted:

- To benefit teaching and learning in our school
- To contribute to the holistic development of children
- For cross curricular purposes
- The implementation of the policy is the responsibility of all the teaching staff

Vision

SPHE in the Primary School fosters the personal development, health and well-being of the child and helps him/her to create and maintain supportive relationships and to become an active and responsible member of society. (Ref: SPHE Teacher Guidelines). Riverview Educate Together NS is a multi-denominational school which upholds the values of the Educate Together ethos, encapsulated in the motto “Learn Together to Live Together”.

Riverview ETNS values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. Through our SPHE programme, 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 programme 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.

Aims

We endeavour to achieve the aims outlined in the SPHE curriculum, which include:

- To promote the personal 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 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 independent nature of the world.

Curriculum Planning

The SPHE programme reflects a spiral approach, where similar aspects are revisited in different ways according to the age, stage of development and readiness of the child. SPHE is intrinsic to the learning and teaching that occurs both formally and informally in the school and in the classroom.

The curriculum is delineated at four levels—Junior and Senior Infants, First and Second Classes, Third and Fourth Classes, and Fifth and Sixth Classes—and is divided into three strands: Myself, Myself and others, and Myself and the wider world.

Each of these strands is further subdivided into a number of strand units or topic areas that contain particular objectives.

Riverview ETNS will teach aspects of all three major strand units each year and strand units will be chosen in such a way that the child will receive a comprehensive programme in SPHE over a two-year period. We have created this timetable to reflect this approach:

With regards to Stay Safe, Riverview ETNS has decided, upon consultation with staff, that it will be taught every second year during the period January to March.

Month	Year 1 (Jnr Infants, 1st, 3rd, 5th)	Year 2 (Snr Infants, 2nd, 4th, 6th)
September/October	Self Identity (Myself)	Myself and my Family (Myself and others)
November/December	My Friends and other people (Myself and others)	Relating to others (Myself and others)
January/February	Safety and Protection (Stay Safe)(Myself)	Growing and Changing (Myself) Sensitive areas of RSE will be covered every second year (Snr Infants, 2nd, 4th and 6th class)
March/April	Making Decisions* (Myself) This strand unit is for 3rd - 6th class only. Infants - 2nd class complete the Safety Issues section of Safety and Protection.	Taking care of my body (Myself)
May/June	Media Education (Myself and the wider world)	Developing Citizenship (Myself and the wider world)

*Making decisions is only a strand unit from 3rd – 6th, Juniors – 2nd may complete the Safety Issues section of Safety and Protection at this time. Due to the increased amount of lessons in the Stay Safe Programme from 3rd to 6th class, placing the strand unit Making decisions after the Safety and protection in a standard two year plan will enable the teacher to achieve some of the content objectives of Making decisions through the Stay Safe Programme.

Stay Safe Programme

The Stay Safe Programme will be covered in Jnr Infants, 1st, 3rd and 5th and will be taught every second year after the Winter break in January and February. All relevant classes will teach the programme at the same time. This will increase the effectiveness of the programme.

RSE Programme

RSE sensitive lessons will be taught to the whole school in the second term every second year.

Other RSE lessons will be taught throughout the year by linking in with curriculum topics.

Teachers refer to the whole school [RSE plan](#) to ensure that they are teaching suitable content and using appropriate terminology. The PDST anatomical terminology grid has been used as a guide when creating this RSE whole school plan. It contains the appropriate terms as recommended by The Dept. of Education, and in consultation with staff and those terms will be used throughout the year at all year levels when appropriate.

Contexts for SPHE:

SPHE will be taught in our school through a combination of the following three contexts:

1. Positive School Climate and Atmosphere

Riverview Educate Together NS has created a positive atmosphere by:

- Building effective communication
- Catering for individual needs
- Creating a health-promoting physical environment
- Developing democratic processes
- Enhancing self-esteem
- Fostering respect for diversity
- Fostering inclusive and respectful language
- Developing appropriate communication
- Developing a school approach to assessment

2. Discrete time for SPHE

SPHE is allocated $\frac{1}{2}$ hour per week on each teacher's timetable in Riverview Educate Together NS. However teachers may allocate 1 hour per fortnight to allow for more in-depth exploration of a strand unit. Children who are withdrawn for supplementary teaching must be included for as much of the SPHE programme as possible. This discrete time is used to develop and practise particular skills, deal with sensitive issues or explore issues that are not addressed in other areas of the curriculum. It has been agreed that content objectives dealing with RSE and Child Protection are addressed through discrete time.

3. Integration with other subject areas and Linkage within SPHE

Teachers will endeavour to adopt a thematic approach to SPHE by integrating it with other subject areas such as Learn Together, Language, Geography, History, Visual Arts, Physical Education, etc. Themes/Projects such as Active Week, Friendship Week, Multicultural Week, etc. will also be explored. Some themes will be explored by the whole school community through Assemblies.

Approaches and methodologies

In Riverview ETNS we believe that the approaches and methodologies used in SPHE are crucial to the effectiveness of the programme. Active learning is the principal learning and teaching approach recommended for SPHE, therefore we will endeavour to teach SPHE using a variety of strategies which include:

- Drama activities
- Cooperative games
- Use of pictures, photographs and visual images
- Discussion: in pairs, small groups, with whole class
- Circle time
- Problem solving activities
- Written activities
- Media studies
- Information and communication technologies
- Looking at children's work
- Use of external speakers/visitors

Confidentiality: While confidentiality within discussion groups will be encouraged, children should be informed that some information may have to be passed on at the discretion of the teacher to the appropriate person e.g. Principal, parents/guardians

Assessment and record keeping

In Riverview ETNS assessment in this subject is based on:

- Willingness to participate in activities
- Interest, enthusiasm/attitudes of children
- Skill level
- Willingness to cooperate with other pupils in structured activity

Assessment takes place on an on-going basis through:

- Teacher observation.
- Teacher-designed tasks.
- Self-assessment by students.
- Portfolios and projects

The information gained from such assessment is used to determine whether the individual or group is ready to proceed to the next task or skill level. Feedback on the areas assessed e.g. willingness to participate, levels of coordination, where relevant are communicated to parents at parent-teacher meetings and on end of year report cards.

Children with Different needs

Teachers are familiar with the NCCA guidelines for teachers of students with different needs (www.ncca.ie/sen/ncca_launch.htm). Where resources allow, every effort will be made in Riverview ETNS to structure classes to support and include children with special needs (e.g. children with emotional and behavioural difficulties; children with learning difficulties; children with physical disabilities and those with exceptional ability.) The learning support and resource teachers will supplement the work of the class teachers where necessary. Riverview ETNS will liaise with trained professionals/appropriate agencies, where appropriate, when dealing with sensitive issues such as bereavement or loss to ensure that children involved are fully supported.

Equality of Participation and Access:

We recognise and value diversity, and believe all children are entitled to access the services, facilities, or amenities that are available in the school environment. Our ethos is based on the four principles of Educate Together i.e. co-educational, multi-denominational, democratic and child-centred. We will endeavour that all children will be given appropriate support to ensure equality of access and participation in the SPHE programme.

Organisational Planning

1. Policies and Programmes that support SPHE:

- Code of Behaviour
- Child Protection Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Health and Safety policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Parental Involvement Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- Relationship and Sexuality Education
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Learn Together Programme
- Different Families, Same Love
- Mindup Programme
- Weaving Wellbeing
- Information booklet for New Parents

2. Homework

SPHE homework, if prescribed in SPHE, will reflect the active learning approach and will reinforce information already taught during class.

3. Individual teachers' planning and reporting

Teachers individual plans are guided by the Whole School Policy on Social, Political and Health Education, the RSE Policy and the curriculum documents for SPHE. Cúntais Míosúla serve in reviewing and developing individual planning and the whole school plan.

4. Staff development

- Teachers have access to current research, reference books, resource materials, and websites dealing with SPHE.
- Where resources permit, demonstrations may be arranged to try out equipment/resources and assess whether or not they should be purchased
- Appropriate SPHE courses are available and teachers encouraged to attend
- Teachers are encouraged to share the expertise acquired at these courses at staff meetings.
- Opportunities for team-teaching will be encouraged in the future.
- Visitors with expertise in areas of the SPHE programme are invited to the school for demonstrations. e.g. mothers with newborn babies, dentists, health care experts.

5. Parental involvement

Parents are actively encouraged to support the SPHE programme in the following ways:

- Parents are informed of the school's programme for SPHE through their parent representatives on the Board of Management; and also by written communications from the school
- Parents are aware of the content of the SPHE programme for their child
- Information will be sent to parents prior to the teaching of the Stay Safe programme and the sensitive topics of RSE.

6. Community links

We believe that the local community has a very important role to play in supporting the programme in SPHE and endeavour to liaise with the members such as the new parent, Dental Hygienist, Health Nurse, Fireman, Garda, Vet, Sports clubs etc.

Implementation

The Principal in co-operation with staff and the SPHE coordinator will be responsible for the implementation of this programme and the upkeep of resources.

Review

It will be necessary to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure optimum implementation of the SPHE curriculum in the school. The whole staff is responsible for coordinating this review. Those involved in the review may include: *Teachers, Pupils, Parents, Post holder, BoM, DES Cigiri*

Ratification and Communication

This policy has been made available to school personnel and the Parents' Association and is readily accessible to parents via the school website.

A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested. This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management at regular intervals.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 7th May 2019.

This policy was reviewed and updated on the 4th June 2025.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Principal, Margaret Burke.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management, Joan Ward.