

# Sutton Park Junior and Intermediate School



## Social Personal and Health Education policy

Original date: February 2005  
Reviewed and approved by BOM: November 2011

### Introductory Statement and Rationale

#### (a) **Introductory Statement**

Education Act 1988

Section 9, subsection (d)

“A recognized school shall provide education to students which is appropriate to their abilities and needs and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing; it shall use its available resources to:

(d) promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school”

White Paper on Education 1995

“Charting our education future” states that “the promotion of the social, personal and health education of students is a major concern for each school.”

Social personal and health education (SPHE) provides opportunities to foster the personal development, health and well being of the individual child, to help him to create and maintain supportive relationships, and to become an active and responsible citizen in society. Through the SPHE programme in Sutton Park, children can develop a framework of values, attitudes, understanding and skills that will inform their decisions and actions both now and in the future. As it has a moral and spiritual dimension, the implementation of the SPHE programme is influenced significantly by the ethos of our school.

#### (b) **Rationale**

This plan has been drawn up in accordance with the SPHE curriculum, and aims to set out our approach to SPHE in Sutton Park. It will form the basis for teachers’ long and short-term planning, and will also inform new or temporary teachers of the approaches and methodologies used in our school.

### Aims of SPHE

Sutton Park Junior and Intermediate schools fully endorses the following aims of the Primary School Curriculum for SPHE:

- To promote the personal development and well-being of each child

- To foster in the child a sense of care and respect for himself 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.

## Overview of curriculum

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 following strands and strand units represent an overview of the content for SPHE:

### **Myself**

- Self-identity
- Taking care of my body
- Growing and changing
- Safety and protection
- Making decisions

*– concerned with the personal development of the individual child and his health and well being*

### **Myself and others**

- Myself and my family
- My friends and other people
- Relating to others

*– focuses on developing a sense of care and respect for other people, and the facility for relating to and communicating effectively with others*

### **Myself and the wider world**

- Developing citizenship
- Media education

*– enables children to explore the various communities in which they live, and also promotes media awareness*

Each child in Sutton Park School receives a comprehensive programme in SPHE every school year. The ‘Walk Tall’ Programme is used as a basis for this in our school, with the other programmes such as ‘Stay Safe’, ‘Relationships and Sexuality’ providing key lessons in their specialised areas. The ‘Walk Tall’ programme is a yearly one which is covered by all teachers from Junior Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class– each programme has its own rationale and guidelines to which teachers can refer.

The learning objectives of the SPHE curriculum for each class are available from the Heads of School and the class teachers. Any objectives not covered in one year, must be included in planning for the following year.

## Organisation of classes, timetable and teaching

SPHE is presented in a combination of contexts within Sutton Park Junior and Intermediate Schools:

- A positive school climate and atmosphere
- Discrete SPHE time
- An integrated approach with other subject areas

### **Positive school climate and atmosphere**

A positive school climate and atmosphere is one where individuals are valued, cared for and respected. Such an atmosphere helps to nurture self-confidence and self-worth, and promotes respectful and caring relationships throughout the school. Sutton Park School has its own specific culture and ethos, which inform the organization of the school, relationships within the school, and priority is given to the welfare of the individual.

Our school uses the following strategies to create a positive climate and atmosphere:-

- ◆ Building effective communication within the school
- ◆ Catering for individual needs of the children
- ◆ Creating a health-promoting physical environment
- ◆ Developing democratic processes
- ◆ Enhancing self-esteem
- ◆ Fostering respect for diversity
- ◆ Fostering inclusive and respectful language
- ◆ Developing appropriate communication between home and school
- ◆ We adopt an agreed Target and Reward system in each class

On a practical level, Sutton Park School aims to create a positive classroom climate and atmosphere through providing:-

- ◆ a pleasant teaching and learning environment that feels spacious and is visually stimulating
- ◆ a variety of ways for children to work and interact positively together
- ◆ appropriate strategies for resolving conflict and rewarding children
- ◆ opportunities to negotiate class rules, and to involve children in decision-making
- ◆ reflection at the end of the school day or week
- ◆ experiences that heighten self-confidence and self-esteem
- ◆ opportunities to set goals for the day or week
- ◆ *quiet time*

### **Discrete time**

Sutton Park School provides for the teaching of some elements of the programme during designated class periods – this amounts to ½ hour weekly, 1 hour fortnightly or blocks of 1 – 2 hours where feasible or appropriate, depending on the subject area and the needs of the children. This time will be

used to develop and practice particular skills, deal with sensitive issues and explore issues not addressed elsewhere.

- ◆ All class teachers need to identify which content objectives are to be addressed through discrete time, and find the resources and materials needed to meet these needs. When planning for discrete time, teachers will ensure that the SPHE programme is comprehensively covered for all children as effectively as possible.
- ◆ Certain whole-school themes are selected by our school, and implemented in all classes for a particular period during discrete time e.g. anti-bullying. This is a useful way of highlighting a particular aspect of the curriculum, and ensuring it is comprehensively covered throughout the school.
- ◆ The timetable should be arranged in block periods as required, rather than confining the time to a set period in each week
- ◆ When drafting timetables for withdrawal of pupils for supplementary teaching, teachers must include these pupils for as much of the SPHE programme as possible.

### **Integration**

At each class level in Sutton Park School, teachers seek to integrate SPHE with other curricular areas. Many aspects of SPHE can be dealt with in the context of relevant subject areas. Through a variety of learning experiences across the curriculum, children work together, solve problems, make decisions, engage in dialogue and reflect critically.

- ◆ All class teachers will identify which content objectives can be addressed through integration with other subjects, and can adopt a thematic approach or a subject-based approach. Integrating learning processes is also an effective way of implementing SPHE across the curriculum, where strategies to foster self-confidence, independence, positive attitudes and critical reflection can be used in a variety of subjects.
- ◆ Teachers will ensure that integration takes place in a meaningful way with work in other areas
- ◆ The integrity of individual subjects will not be compromised,
- ◆ The timetable should be arranged in such a way as to accommodate any integrated learning and teaching – each teacher will decide on the length of time it will take to adequately cover a strand unit, and develop the timetable accordingly.

### **Teaching methods**

Sutton Park Junior and Intermediate Schools believes that active learning is the principal learning and teaching approach most appropriate for SPHE. It requires children to actively participate in their learning in a wide variety of ways, thereby increasing the possibility of internalizing what they have explored and of being able to use the learning in their everyday lives. Active learning contributes significantly to fostering self-confidence, self-discipline and self-control in the learner.

Active learning is:

- ◆ a process whereby children learn, explore, question, draw conclusions and reflect on outcomes
- ◆ can be carried out by individuals or in groups
- ◆ engages children at different levels
- ◆ promotes action
- ◆ places children at the centre of the learning process
- ◆ requires the teacher to guide and direct the work

- ◆ requires an atmosphere of trust and support

A broad range of approaches and methodologies are incorporated within the active learning strategies in Sutton Park School, where the child is encouraged to participate in his own learning and where each contribution is valued and appreciated. These approaches include:

- ◆ talk and discussion
- ◆ collaborative learning
- ◆ problem solving
- ◆ use of the environment

In SPHE there is a particular emphasis on children working together – this can include many different types of group interaction, such as collaborative work in small or large groups, or co-operative learning activities in twos and threes.

A variety of active learning strategies are promoted in Sutton Park School. Teachers choose particular strategies depending on the objectives of a lesson, the needs and ability levels of the children, and the resources available. Flexibility and variety are crucial to the use of these strategies, which can also be linked with specific subject areas. The following strategies are promoted in our school:

- ◆ drama activities
- ◆ co-operative games
- ◆ pictures, photographs and visual images
- ◆ discussion
- ◆ written activities
- ◆ use of media & information and communication technologies
- ◆ looking at children's work

### **Drama activities**

Drama provides active learning situations that explore human relationships, behaviour and events. In Sutton Park School children are encouraged to express their feelings and explore different social situations. They are helped to make sense of the world around them, and to understand themselves and their own behaviour in relation to the behaviour of others. Drama and role play are effectively used to help children explore different ways of resolving conflict, and to enable children to learn to negotiate, listen and support one another.

### **Co-operative games**

Games are a valuable means of helping children to work together in a caring and co-operative way. They are particularly helpful for dealing with sensitive issues such as those of ethnic groups and equality. In Sutton Park School, children are given the opportunity to practice a range of skills, to be a team member and an effective group member. These games range from active games that require space for movement, to quieter board games and table activities that can be used in the classroom.

### **Pictures, photographs and visual images**

These are used in a variety of ways in SPHE. Pictures and photographs can be used in many ways within a lesson, and are a powerful means of provoking a reaction or arousing interest in a particular topic or subject. They can be helpful in presenting sensitive or controversial information to children, either at class level or in a small group. In exploring visual images, children can become familiar with some of the techniques used by the media, and in so doing become critical media users.

## **Discussion**

In Sutton Park School, this takes place in pairs, small groups, or with the whole class. It is a useful way of assessing what the children know, and of establishing where gaps exist in their knowledge. Discussion is often the principal activity in a lesson where children present their own viewpoints, and listen and respond to the opinions and views of others. The conclusion of an activity often takes the form of a discussion, where ideas and suggestions can be teased out and clarified.

Discussion is an element of most activities in Sutton Park School, and particularly useful strategies for promoting discussion and dialogue are as follows:-

- ◆ open-ended statements
- ◆ brainstorming
- ◆ circle work
- ◆ role play and mime
- ◆ creating pictures and posters
- ◆ debates or quizzes
- ◆ interviews
- ◆ stories, poems and songs
- ◆ exploring a piece of music

## **Written activities**

Surveys, questionnaires, lists, check-lists, projects, worksheets are all useful ways of provoking children's thinking, helping them to gain new insights, and examining topics in some depth. Projects are carried out regularly in Sutton Park, and children are encouraged to explore and research a topic in detail, to question popular ideas, and to develop opinions and ideas of their own. Any written activities undertaken are discussed, findings explored, and reasons given for particular conclusions. Computer skills are developed accordingly, and children are encouraged to present their work in an appealing and interesting manner.

## **Use of the Media & Information and Communication technologies**

Children live in an information society, and Sutton Park School provides children with the opportunities to:

- ◆ access and retrieve information
- ◆ explore techniques used in the media, and the various technologies for communication available to them
- ◆ make decisions and become more discerning in their use of technology and the media
- ◆ develop self-confidence in using a wide range of technology
- ◆ enhance their relationship skills as they discover new ways of communicating, and explore and learn together.

Word-processing and publishing programs give children the opportunity to draft, edit and correct their own work, television and radio can also be beneficial in exploring particular topics and issues in SPHE. The internet provides children with a wide range of source material on many topics, and SPHE provides the opportunity to promote the skills for using the internet appropriately in the senior classes.

## **Looking at children's work**

Active participation of children in the various activities provides information about their progress in the SPHE curriculum. This information enables the teacher to help the children learn more effectively, and a number of techniques are used in Sutton Park School to collect and record information about pupils' progress:-

- ◆ teacher observation
- ◆ teacher designated tasks and tests
- ◆ portfolios and projects

Teachers are encouraged to share their skills and experience with other staff members. All staff have received guidance in planning from an experienced trainer. Time is allocated at staff meetings to discuss any aspects of the SPHE programme that is deemed appropriate e.g. our bullying policy and subsequent whole school theme approach to this issue was decided at one of our staff meetings. Teachers are encouraged to avail of internal or external expertise to inform and upgrade the skills of our staff members, e.g. inviting guest speakers to talk to the children.

## Resources

Sutton Park Junior and Intermediate Schools use a range of materials and ideas for developing particular lessons in SPHE. These include programmes, books, posters, work cards, teacher handbooks, brochures, and information gathered at professional development courses and seminars undertaken by various members of staff in the area of SPHE.

On occasions, it is appropriate to invite speakers to visit the school. There are a number of people in the local community who could support the SPHE curriculum in very significant ways e.g. a local garda, firefighter, traffic warden, district nurse or doctor, local vet, librarian, writer or artist, local radio presenter or members of local community groups. These groups or individuals can visit the classroom, work with the teacher and reinforce a particular topic that has been taught.

These visits are arranged in accordance with the school plan for SPHE, and guest speakers are generally professionals in their field, or selected through recommendation. Class teachers remain with the class at all times during a visit by a guest speaker. Teachers can work through the specific topic, encourage talk and discussion after the visit, and supply follow up activities to reinforce the topic in question. Parents are made aware of some of these presentations through discussions with class teachers or by their child.

The internet can be a useful resource. Sutton Park School has an E-Safety policy, which is reviewed on an ongoing basis by our ICT Committee. Appropriate hardware and software have been installed to safeguard Internet usage, and all teachers should familiarise themselves with material on websites prior to use by children.

## Assessment

Assessment is a central part of the teaching process in SPHE in our school. As many of the benefits of SPHE do not emerge or become evident until long after the child has left primary school, assessment refers to the aspects of the programme that can realistically be assessed during his/her time in Sutton Park.

The purpose of assessment in SPHE is to provide the teacher with information on how and what children are learning, and how they transfer learning from one situation to another. The assessment process enables the teacher to :

- ◆ Modify curriculum content according to the needs of the child
- ◆ Adapt learning and teaching strategies in the classroom
- ◆ Assess the effectiveness of learning through different strategies
- ◆ Discover what the child knows, understands and can do
- ◆ Promote self-assessment in the child
- ◆ Explore how he/she transfers learning from one situation to another
- ◆ Communicate with child, parents and others regarding his strengths, abilities and overall progress through SPHE

A common language and whole school approach is used in Sutton Park to observe, describe, discuss and report on children's progress which leads to continuity and progression of SPHE in our school. Time is spent discussing and sharing ideas, which ensures that assessment is used in the most positive and helpful way.

Sutton Park uses a variety of techniques to assess the child's progress in SPHE. These include:

- ◆ Teacher observation
- ◆ Teacher designated tasks
- ◆ Projects
- ◆ Pupil self assessment

### **Teacher observation**

This is one of the most important tools of assessment in Sutton Park. Teachers observe how children work with one another, types of questions asked, level of interest and self-confidence displayed, and can recognise children who do not have the necessary coping skills for dealing with difficulties and change. In observing children interacting with one another, the teacher can discover those children who need help in developing social skills and abilities. Informal notes are kept of such observations which are useful for future planning, and in communicating with others.

### **Teacher designated tasks**

Through a variety of structured activities, children can explore many issues relevant to the social, personal and health dimensions of their lives. These activities promote dialogue, questioning, reflection and action, and help children to internalise what they have learnt and transfer it to aspects of their own lives. In Sutton Park, such activities reinforce the topics taught in the Walk Tall and Stay Safe programme, and are used to ascertain the child's knowledge and understanding of a topic.

### **Projects**

Projects are carried out in all classes, either by individuals or small groups of children, and are a useful means of assessing children's understanding of a particular topic. Teachers take note of information gathered, methods of research used, how children work together and styles of presentation. Projects are displayed regularly on notice boards, out in the corridor, and in the various classes.

Assessment may take place informally (in the classroom and at playtime), and formally (tasks or tests which determine children's progress). Information from behavioral tests carried out by psychologists or other professionals also contribute to the overall assessment of the child.

Information regarding the child's abilities, strength and overall progress in SPHE is shared with other teachers where appropriate, as the child moves through the school. These recorded observations are helpful in discussions and meetings with parents, and are also used in discussions with individual children. Observations of the child in teacher-designated tasks, and projects form the basis for this information. This is useful in communicating information about the child to the parent, and facilitates future decisions regarding pupils' needs.

## Sensitive Issues

It is important that the class teacher is informed of any students' recent experience or disposition, which is important to be sensitively aware of while teaching SPHE. Students should be told that the SPHE classroom is not a suitable place to disclose issues of a sensitive nature but also they must be advised of who they can go to talk to in confidence. If a disclosure is made in class, it should be dealt with according to the Children's First Guidelines and referred appropriately.

### *Child Protection*

Sutton Park Junior and Intermediate Schools follow the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures which are based on Children First, National guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

All staff members (and new members of staff) are informed about the Child Protection guidelines, and procedures for dealing with incidents relating to child protection. This is done at the first staff meeting of the school year.

Parents should be informed that we will follow the recommendations as laid down in the Child Protection guidelines.

### *Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)*

RSE is an integral part of SPHE throughout the school, and lessons relating to RSE are found in the following strands and strand units for all classes:

<b>Myself:</b>	Self Identity Taking care of my body Growing and changing Safety and Protection
<b>Myself and Others:</b>	Myself and my family My friends and other people Relating to others

Teachers in Sutton Park School list the content objectives that will be addressed during discrete time for the sensitive areas of RSE, as part of the wider SPHE curriculum. A shared understanding exists among members of staff of these objectives, which are a reflection of our school ethos.

Confidentiality is a key element of the RSE programme in Sutton Park, and this is emphasized when the ground rules are being set. All matters of a confidential nature are managed according to the guidelines set in the RSE policy document.

If teachers are concerned about any aspects of the RSE programme, these can be discussed with the school principal. Teachers have the right to withdraw from any elements of the RSE programme they are not comfortable with teaching, and another staff member can then implement this particular aspect of the programme in their place.

### **ACCORD (Grade 5 & 6 programme)**

In Sutton Park Intermediate School, an outside body known as ACCORD visits the school for a day to cover the topic of RSE with the children of Grades 5 & 6. Arrangements for the Accord programme take place as follows:

- ◆ Two trained facilitators in the area of RSE spend a day in the school with pupils of Grades 5 & 6. Teachers can choose whether to remain in class during these sessions – however, the facilitators from ACCORD feel that the children will be less inhibited if the teachers are absent. Children come to school for the same length of day as normal.
- ◆ Parents have the option of withdrawing their child from this programme if they so wish - in this event; the child can remain at home on these days. In our experience at Sutton Park, it is more common for children to participate in the programme, rather than opting out.
- ◆ The facilitators set ground rules at the beginning of each session, and the facilitators manage all matters of a confidential nature sensitively.
- ◆ Prior to the visit by the Accord facilitators, all parents involved receive a detailed form outlining the content involved. Forms are duly signed and returned before the start of the programme.
- ◆ Questions are answered in these sessions with Accord facilitators on a matter of fact basis, and explanations are given in such a fashion as is deemed appropriate. ACCORD believes in a straightforward matter of fact approach, and all questions are answered during the session in an open forum fashion. Questions can also be written anonymously and handed to the facilitator, who answers these in a sensitive manner. Discretion is used at all times when dealing with sensitive issues.

The role of the class teacher in delivering the RSE programme may be to engage in either preparatory work or follow up work resulting from the ACCORD visit.

### **Appropriate Language**

We have agreed that following reference to R.S.E. documents, it is appropriate to introduce the relevant language at the stages outlined below.

Infants	Names for body parts (will be corrected rather than formally taught)
Grades 1, 2 & 3	As above + breast and womb (taught formally)
Grade 4	Penis, vagina, fallopian tubes, menstruation and pubic hair
Grade 5	As above + cervix, testicles, scrotum, erection, sperm production and wet dreams
Grade 6	As above + conception, ovum, hormones, fertilised eggs, sexual intercourse and pregnancy

Sutton Park Junior and Intermediate Schools recognise that the parents are the primary providers of RSE to their children. The function of the school is to play a supportive role in this area. Parents

should be given the opportunity to view the content of the programme to be taught at each level and students will be advised to discuss particular topics at home.

### *Stay Safe Programme*

The Stay Safe programme is taught in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education. It is based on the following core elements, each of which is an integral part of the SPHE curriculum:

- ◆ Nurturing children's self-esteem
- ◆ Building children's confidence
- ◆ Enabling children to be assertive
- ◆ Helping children to identify and express their feelings

Sutton Park Junior and Intermediate Schools use both the Walk Tall and Stay Safe programmes to provide an integrated and comprehensive approach to teaching children personal safety skills. All questions are answered informatively and sensitively, during discrete time for SPHE. If the class teacher feels this is not appropriate, questions can be answered outside of this time. Children are encouraged to confide in an adult if they have a problem. Parents have the option of making an appointment with the class teacher to address any sensitive issues that may arise.

### **Parental Involvement in SPHE**

Parents have been involved at every stage of the implementation of the S.P.H.E. programme in Sutton Park and were involved in the drafting of this policy.

Many topics covered require home/school links so that parents are aware of issues covered in class.

### **The Whole School**

This SPHE plan has been drawn up in accordance with many of Sutton Park School's policies and programmes, and reflects our school ethos and mission statement.

- ◆ RSE Programme
- ◆ Stay Safe Programme
- ◆ Walk Tall Programme
- ◆ Child Protection Policy
- ◆ E-Safety Policy
- ◆ Enrolment Policy
- ◆ Code of Discipline
- ◆ Anti-Bullying Policy
- ◆ Health and Safety Statement
- ◆ Substance Use Policy

The process of all teaching and learning have implications for personal and social development. The ways in which members of the staff relate to one another and to the students, and the quality of relationships between students, form the foundation for personal and social development in a school.

Therefore every teacher and staff member, every class and extra curricular activity has offered and continues to offer opportunities for enhancing the personal and social development of the students.

A supportive school environment is essential if SPHE is to be effective. In such an environment

- People feel valued
- Self-esteem is fostered
- Respect, tolerance and fairness are evident
- High expectations and standards are promoted
- There is support for those with difficulties
- Open communication is the norm
- Effort is recognized and rewarded
- Uniqueness and difference are valued
- Conflict is handled constructively
- Initiative and creativity are encouraged
- Social, moral and civic values are promoted

The principles of fair play, respect, tolerance and reward for effort must permeate the whole school climate. The development of an appreciation for learning, respect and caring for self and others, a sense of belonging and a sense of social responsibility-these are tasks of the whole school community.

### *Children with different needs*

All children in Sutton Park have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the full range of experiences offered in SPHE. Account is taken of the range of difference in the school, the fact that children come from a variety of backgrounds, beliefs and understanding, and can be at many different stages of their personal, social and health development. All of these factors influence the approach taken to SPHE.

Teachers in all classes ensure the full participation of children with special educational needs in the SPHE programme. SPHE addresses areas that are particularly important for children with general learning disabilities, such as social skills development - communication, behaviour and assertive skills. Sutton Park helps develop interpersonal skills through inclusion, communication with parents, and a positive classroom atmosphere.

All children are encouraged to make a contribution to the SPHE programme, regardless of academic achievement. Teachers in Sutton Park are aware that some children have communication and social difficulties which impede their social relations with others, thus making it difficult for them to gain acceptance with their peers. All children are given opportunities to assume responsibilities in both the class and school context.

Activities are adapted and modified so that all children in the class can participate. When developing social skills, teachers provide as many opportunities as possible for children to interact and work, both in pairs and in teams, on the SPHE programme.

### *Equality of participation and access*

Equal opportunities for choosing team and group members are afforded to all students, as children with inadequate social skills are often the last to be picked by peers. Teachers in Sutton Park are aware of

the strengths and needs of children with special needs, and differentiate as much as possible where necessary so that all children can participate successfully.

Equal opportunities are given to all children in Sutton Park, to participate in discussion and debate on classroom topics. All children have access to services, facilities and amenities in the school environment. Children in Sutton Park live in a diverse society, which requires the development of mutual understanding and a sense of respect for the dignity of each person.

The SPHE programme in our school provides a context in which children can learn about various ethnic, social and cultural groups, and recognize and appreciate the contribution of these groups to society. Through SPHE, the children discover the role each person plays in countering prejudice, discrimination and inequality.