

LORETO BALBRIGGAN



SPHE PROVISION

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Mission Statement

Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan, is a Catholic girls' secondary school. In the spirit of Mary Ward we aim to develop all the abilities of our students in order that they realise their full potential and use their talents for the service of others. We also aim to encourage self confidence and self esteem in a happy atmosphere and structured environment. The school community, collaborating together in mutual respect strives for holistic excellence.

Rationale

The teaching and learning of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides a unique space where students can develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values needed to support their physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing, now and in the future. SPHE in Loreto Balbriggan is grounded in values of respect, equality, inclusivity, responsibility, dignity, compassion and empathy.

The SPHE programme in Loreto Balbriggan takes place within a Christian understanding of human development and sexuality and recognises the dignity of the individual. The programme addresses contemporary topics which are dealt with at a level appropriate to the age of the student and within a moral framework in keeping with the characteristic spirit of the school.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme

The SPHE Programme in Loreto Balbriggan is committed to the fulfilment of the aim of education through the teaching and learning of SPHE.

In SPHE, we aim to:

- To equip students with the necessary skills to function in society.
- Develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values that will help them to create and maintain respectful and caring relationships
- To nurture self-esteem, self-awareness, self-worth and self-confidence
- To enable the students to develop a framework for responsible decision making.
- To facilitate an open environment that promotes discussion and self-reflection.
- To foster physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing.
- To empower our students to assert themselves as confident, competent and capable young individuals, and
- Lead fulfilling and healthy lives.

Subject Planning for a Culturally Diverse Society

We are committed to enabling students to respect and celebrate diversity, to promote equality and to challenge unfair discrimination.

Therefore the following aims are included in our SPHE programme:

- To support the whole school approach to integration, cultural diversity and tolerance, informed by the school ethos.
- To achieve diversification and enrichment of each student's life through social, personal and health education.
- To enable, through social, personal and health education to development, full and effective participation in society in a variety of roles
- To develop students' critical consciousness in respect of all life choices and empower students to make life affirming decisions.

We strive to have an inclusive SPHE programme:

- Students are provided with opportunities to express and respond to differing opinions, interpretations and ideas, thereby broadening their social and cultural experiences while developing skills in listening, reading, speaking and writing; students are helped to recognise prejudice, bias, propaganda, media manipulation and stereotyping in print and images, and thereby develop a critical consciousness with respect to social, personal and health aspects of life.
- Students are enabled to empathise with the experience and point of view of others by being encouraged to engage in groupwork and attempt role plays and active learning experiences that help to encourage assertive self-esteem. Students participate in workshops
- Students are exposed to cultural diversity through class discussions, projects, Inter-Cultural Day and other whole school activities.
- Units of Learning support themes relevant to tolerance development, respect and self-esteem e.g. growing up, communication, relationships, dealing with stress, adolescent development, bullying and substance abuse, study skill, to name but a few.
- The diversity of students' culture is celebrated, recognised and acknowledged in the SPHE programme.

Planning for Students with Additional Needs:

The aims of education for students with additional educational needs are set out by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment in the overview to the NCCA Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities, which states that the broad aims of education for students with additional educational needs reflect those that are relevant to all students and include:

- (a) enabling the student to live a full life and to realise his or her full potential as a unique individual through access to an appropriate broad and balanced curriculum;
- (b) enabling the student to function as independently as possible in society through the provision of such educational supports as are necessary to realise that potential;
- (c) enabling the student to continue learning in adult life.

(National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2002, p. 2)

The current aim of SPHE teachers at Loreto Secondary School Balbriggan is to encourage the maximum integration of students with SEN in mainstream school and develop the necessary supports to facilitate this development.

The active learning methodologies of the SPHE Programme encourage and facilitate the participation of all students and provide opportunities for student learning and achievement in creative ways.

Each teacher will consult with the SEN department/year head/form teacher to identify any additional needs of students in their classes (dyslexia, ADHD, ASD, physical disability etc). Teachers will provide supplementary notes/worksheets and guidance to these students when needed. Teachers will consider their classroom layout in order to facilitate the needs of the learners in their class. For example, a student with ADHD may need to sit in an area free of posters or stimuli. Teachers will also facilitate movement and sensory breaks should the student need it.

Class Organisation and Timetabling

Currently, all classes are mixed ability form class groupings from 1st to 3rd Year. We believe that the mixed ability groupings support the principles of the SPHE programme and allow for the efficient, effective and creative teaching of our subject.

1st Year - 1 hour long class once a week
2nd Year - 1 hour long class once a week
3rd Year - 1 hour long class once a week

Currently, an RSE programme takes place as part of Religious Education in Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Year. Classes are conducted on topics pertinent to the updated curriculum specification 2024. In September 2024, SPHE classes will be allocated to all senior cycle students, one hour per week.

In organising the learning environment, the teacher will be careful to create an atmosphere which respects the privacy of each individual student and treats each student with sensitivity and care. Active learning methods are used to ensure that students actively participate in their own learning.

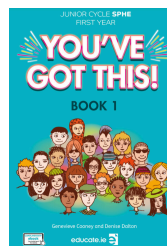
Textbooks

Students at Junior Cycle level utilise 'You've Got This' book 1 - 3, published by Educate. Students complete tasks in their copies/in folders as per Junior Cycle book scheme

1st Year

'You've Got This' book 1 student workbook

Published by Educate



2nd Year

'You've Got This' book 2 student workbook

Published by Educate



3rd Year

'You've Got This' book 3 student workbook

Published by Educate



SPHE Short Course Specification in Loreto Balbriggan

The Junior Cycle Short Course Specification is presented in four strands, each of which appears in each year of the three-year cycle.

Strand 1: Understanding Myself and Others

Strand 2: Making Healthy Choices

Strand 3: Relationships and Sexuality

Strand 4: Emotional Wellbeing



Strand 1: Understanding myself and others: This strand focuses on developing self-awareness and self-esteem and building some of the foundational skills and dispositions needed for healthy relationships and to thrive in life (including communicating and negotiating, listening, showing empathy, respecting difference, and self-management/self-regulation).

Strand 2: Making healthy choices: This strand offers opportunities for students to consider how they can make healthy choices to support their wellbeing. It explores what being healthy might look like for a teenager, what helps or gets in the way of making healthy choices and how to access reliable information to support good choices. Students will also practice the skills needed for making healthy decisions and come to understand contextual factors, such as family, peer, media and social pressures, that influence decisions.

Strand 3: Relationships and sexuality: This strand explores the cognitive, physical, emotional and social aspects of relationships and sexuality through a positive, inclusive and rights-based approach. The focus is on family relationships, friendships, romantic/intimate and potential sexual relationships in the future.

Strand 4: Emotional wellbeing: This strand primarily focuses on nurturing emotional wellbeing and promoting positive mental health. It helps develop problem solving and coping skills for dealing with the emotional ups and downs of life, explores how to support themselves and others in challenging times and discusses where/how to find support, when needed.

The four strands are underpinned by three cross-cutting elements that support effective teaching and learning in SPHE. These are:

- **Awareness**
- **Dialogue**
- **Reflection and action.**

Awareness: Awareness is the ability to understand one's own thoughts, emotions, values and behaviour. It includes understanding how different things influence our sense of self and how we live our lives, including the influence of family, peers, the internet, gender, culture and social norms. This element also includes an awareness that to be human is to be in a relationship and that we all share a common humanity, dignity and rights.

Dialogue: Through dialogical teaching and learning students are facilitated in engaging with a diversity of viewpoints; can discuss and reflect on their own perspectives, values, and behaviours and those of others; enlarge their understanding on topics of relevance to their lives and come to informed, thoughtful decisions based on their personal values, with due regard to their own rights and the rights of others. Respectful dialogue is aided by presuming a diversity of backgrounds, identities, cultures and experiences in every classroom and seeing these as a resource for learning.

Reflection and action: This focuses on students reflecting on what they have learned and coming to their own personal insights and conclusions in response to their learning. It focuses on enabling students to consider how the learning can inform their choices, behaviour and relationships, and discerning what it means for their lives now or for the future. Education in SPHE is a 'praxis'; an ongoing process of critical reflection and action, nurtured by dialogue with others.

*Junior Cycle SPHE Short Course Specification 2023

SPHE Short Course Specification 2023 in Loreto Balbriggan

1st year 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

As well as the first year course content, students are first introduced to SPHE through the Loreto Balbriggan **Orientation Programme**. This programme takes place over one week in August/September and consists of a series of workshops and activities that address a wide range of issues that may be encountered by first year students. The workshops aim at making the new student informed, comfortable and happy in their new environment.

First Year students may also participate in **'Homework Club'** programme to help them settle into secondary school. The objectives of this programme are:

- To help 1st year settle into the new secondary school system
- To give each 1st year who signs up a TY student buddy who they meet every Monday after school for 1 hour to go through a programme and to help answer any questions they may have in a relaxed and supportive environment
- To provide individualised solutions for students with regard to locker management, timetabling management, study and school bags, all the little things that make life more difficult for the transition into secondary school.

2nd year SPHE Aims:

- To enable the students to confidently communicate their feelings
- To evaluate their experiences of first year
- To examine the changing dynamics in their own families
- To accept and recognise the complexity of human relations
- To analyse situations to allow effective and mature decision making
- To know and identify the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol
- To address body image and confidence issues relating to themselves
- To discuss the risks posed by peer pressure in all areas of their lives
- To make informed choices with regard to personal wellbeing
- To recognise issues pertaining to personal safety issues

3rd year SPHE Aims:

- To promote physical, mental and emotional health and well-being
- To enable the students to confidently communicate their feelings
- To evaluate their experiences of second year
- To examine the changing dynamics in their own families
- To devise a personalised study plan
- To analyse situations to allow effective and mature decision making
- To assess their own relationships with respect to sexuality
- To address body image and confidence issues relating to themselves
- To learn to manage exam preparation
- To develop an awareness of physical health

Parental Involvement

The SPHE Department promotes open and positive lines of communication with students Guardians/Parents. The following opportunities allow for communication with parents:

- Incoming 1st Year Night
- Parent Teacher Meetings
- School Journal
- Individual Meetings on request

Provisions for Ongoing Support and Professional Development for Teachers:

The school will facilitate participating teachers in taking part in ongoing professional development so as to provide the proper delivery of the SPHE and RSE programmes. It will also ensure that appropriate teaching materials which have been identified by staff as useful and approved by the Principal are available for delivery of the programme.

RSE in SPHE

Relationships and Sexuality Education in Loreto Balbriggan embedded in SPHE in Junior Cycle and in non-academic Religious Education at Senior Cycle. At the implementation of Senior Cycle SPHE in September 2025, RSE content will be taught in line with the specification in SPHE class.

The RSE Programme in Loreto Secondary School should enable students to:

- Acquire the understanding and skills necessary to form healthy friendships and relationships.
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness and the skills for building and maintaining self-esteem.
- Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals change and grow, especially during adolescence and to develop respect for differences between individuals.
- Understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexual activity and associated health consequences.

- Understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality including sex roles, stereotyping, gender issues, consent and cultural influences on sexuality.
- Develop a Christian value system encompassing respect, responsibility, co-operation, honesty and fairness.
- Value dynamics of families and appreciate the responsibilities of all associated relationships.
- Develop strategies for decisions and actions consistent with personal moral integrity and be respectful of the rights and dignity of others.
- Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflicts and threats to personal safety.
- To guide and enable young people to engage safely and ethically with social media and emerging technology to help them understand and manage their digital relationships.

Confidentiality

- At the beginning of each academic year and at regular intervals throughout the year, students are informed that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
- It is school policy that in circumstances where a student is considered at some risk of any type of abuse or breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Designated Liaison person or Deputy Designated Liaison person if DLP is not available.
- Teachers must indicate clearly to students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential. The student can then decide whether to proceed or not.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 states in 4.4.1 that

“Mandated persons who receive a disclosure of harm from a child, which is at or above the threshold of harm (Section 4.3), must make a mandated report of the concerns to Tusla. Children First National Guidance 2017 states that “mandated persons are not required to judge the truth of the claim or the credibility of the child.”

The Child Protection Procedures also state that if the school becomes aware that a young person is sexually active under the age of consent it has a responsibility to inform her parents. The legal age of consent in Ireland is 17.

Managing Sensitive Issues

- In managing sensitive issues, SPHE teachers are encouraged to consult Compass, Form teachers or Year Heads (if appropriate) when planning sensitive issues in order to be sensitive to individual student's situations and circumstances.
- SPHE Teachers can speak to Form teachers and Year Heads to make a referral of a student to the Compass Referral System if they have concerns about an individual student.
- SPHE Teachers in Loreto Balbriggan are conscious that the SPHE class is not a suitable forum for the disclosure of sensitive issues of a personal nature. Students should be advised of this, students will be reminded of the school's pastoral supports and of where they can go for help.
- If an unexpected disclosure is made that causes concern, the SPHE teacher should refer as appropriate (informed by the school policy??) to a colleague and or to the DLP OR DDLP, if appropriate. Notices are placed around the school outlining this information.
- A copy of the School Child Protection Policy is available for all staff beside the telephone in the Staff Room, outside the Principal's office and Deputy Principal's office and in the Teaching Drive. The Pastoral Care referral policy is available in the office.

SPHE Teaching Methodologies

SPHE in Loreto Balbriggan incorporates a wide range of teaching methodologies including:

- Group Discussion
- Geographical Voting
- Brainstorming
- Role Play
- Case Studies
- Artwork
- Cartoons
- Narrative expression
- Games – Icebreakers
- Games – simulations
- Debates
- Project work
- Sentence Completion
- Situation Cards
- Dilemma Boards
- Visualisation
- Guided Imagery
- Sculpting
- Ranking Exercises
- Rounds
- Relaxation
- Rounds
- Multimedia / video
- Visitors

School Policies that inform the SPHE Policy

- Child Safeguarding Statement and associated risk assessment
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Relationships & Sexuality Policy
- Wellbeing Policy Statement & Framework for Practice
- Whole School Guidance Plan
- SPHE Provision
- Anti-Bullying Policy*
- Student Charter
- Code of Behaviour
- SEN Policy
- AUP Policy
- *Bí Cinéalta from September 2025

*Bí Cinéalta as of Sept 2025

A copy of all policies are available for staff and parents on the school's website and are available otherwise upon request.