



**OUR  
LADY'S  
SCHOOL**  
TERENURE



## **An introduction to 1st Year SPHE and RSE (Relationships & Sexuality Education)**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

11th November 2019

We hope your daughter has settled into the new school year and is developing positive organisational skills and friendships with her peers across her whole year group. During the first term, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) classes were focussed on topics such as 'Who Am I?' and 'Minding Myself and Others'. These topics will continue to be discussed throughout the Wellbeing SPHE programme.

Wellbeing SPHE in Post-Primary schools is a programme for students in the Junior Cycle which builds on the experience of primary level learning. The goal of SPHE is to raise appropriate awareness of social, personal, health and wellbeing issues so students can become more confident in making their own life choices. SPHE should also help them create and maintain supportive relationships.

SPHE is allocated one 40-minute period per week and is a heavily discussion-based subject, allowing the students to have their voices heard and their opinions considered. There is no written examination in SPHE, but each student completes a passage in her 'SPHE Journal' each week. This reflection will allow students to keep track of her growth and progress in each class. The workbook we use complements the Wellbeing programme in the new Junior Cycle.

The Aims of Wellbeing in SPHE are:

- To promote physical, social, mental, emotional health and wellbeing.
- To promote self-acceptance and self-confidence.
- To enable students to develop a framework for responsible decision making.
- To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.
- To enable students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities.

Each student will participate in all four modules that comprise the Wellbeing SPHE curriculum at Junior Cycle:

1. **Who Am I?**- Learning how to study/ Be Safe/ How I See Myself and Others
2. **Minding Myself and Others**- Being Healthy/ Substance Abuse/ Respectful Communication/ Anti-Bullying
3. **Team Up**- Friendship/ The Relationship Spectrum/ Sexuality, Gender Identity & Sexual Health/ Media Influences on Relationships & Sexuality
4. **My Mental Health**- Positive Mental Health/ Mental Health and Mental Ill-Health/ Dealing With Tough Times/ Loss and Bereavement

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Each of these modules will be taught on an annual basis at Junior Cycle and will look at various topics that are appropriate to the age and maturity level of the year group.

During the final academic term of the year in Our Lady's, we will focus on Relationships and Sexual Education. I would like to outline the topics that will be discussed. The SPHE team would be most grateful if parents could discuss the 'Team Up' topics with their daughter and support the programme and student learning at home. The NCCA recognise that "*parents are the primary providers of RSE to their children. The function of the school is to play a supportive role in this area*"<sup>1</sup>

**Students will partake in six classes on RSE in April 2020 covering the following:**

- Appreciate the value of friendship
- Explore how friendships may change over time
- Identify the qualities of friendship
- Think about how you are as a friend
- Recognise the physical changes that take places in boys and girls during puberty
- Learn about the parts of the male and female reproductive system and what they do
- Understand how pregnancy begins
- Define the term stereotyping
- Be aware of the nature of stereotyping
- Explain the terms sexuality and sexual orientation
- Explore ways of supporting someone who is lesbian or gay

We would like to make you aware of this module due to the fact that your daughter may have some specific questions that she may not wish to discuss in class. Parents' involvement is vital to the success of the SPHE curriculum.

If you have any queries regarding this module and its implementation, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours faithfully,

Ms M. Gorby  
Principal

Ms J. Reilly  
SPHE Subject Co-ordinator

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<sup>1</sup> NCCA, '*Resource Material for RSE: Junior Cycle*', p. 9.