



SPHE Information Update

Junior Cycle SPHE specification

- The new Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum specification was introduced in September 2023 for all first years. The aim of the course is to build students' self-awareness and positive self-worth; to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values that will support them to lead fulfilling and healthy lives; empower them to create, nurture and maintain respectful and loving relationships with self and others; and enhance their capacity to contribute positively to society.
- The Junior Cycle SPHE specification consists of four strands: Understanding Myself and Others; Making Healthy Choices; Relationship and Sexuality; and Emotional Wellbeing. You can view it [here](#).
- Teaching and learning with the new curriculum is designed to be appropriate for the age and stage of development of students, whether in first year, second year or third year. This is based on research and the extensive public consultation led by the NCCA in 2022. The report of the consultation is [here](#).
- The final specification is informed by this consultation. It is supported by teacher professional learning seminars designed and provided by Oide, the professional support service for teachers.
- Learning outcomes over the three years of Junior Cycle range from communicating in a respectful and effective manner, to appreciating the importance of setting healthy boundaries, considering the impact of stress and techniques to manage day to day stresses, and learning outcomes dealing with alcohol, smoking and other addictive substances.
- Sensitive topics such as the influence of pornography are also addressed. Any suggestion that teachers would be expected to teach or introduce explicit content or topics is false. The curriculum categorically does not expose children to graphic or explicit content, or normalise the use of pornography. On the contrary, key messages would be that pornography is not a good place to go to learn about sex, that it can be disturbing and even damaging for young people, and that it is incompatible with values of human dignity, respect and gender equality.
- The curriculum specification is published [here](#) where parents and other interested parties can view the full specification including aim, rationale and learning outcomes for themselves.
- It should also be noted that, in accordance with Section 30 of the Education Act, 1998, parents have a right to have their children opt out of classes which are contrary to the conscience of the parent if they so wish.