

# WELL-BEING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Resources for  
Promoting Well-Being  
in Primary Schools



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This Booklet contains information on resources which are complementary to the *Well-being in Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (2015)*. This information will be available on the DES website and up-dated as additional information is made available or as the need arises.

## 1. Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

Social, personal and health education (SPHE) provides particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health and well-being of the individual child, to help him/her to create and maintain supportive relationships and become an active and responsible citizen in society. Through an SPHE programme that is planned and consistent throughout the school, children can develop a framework of values, attitudes, understanding and skills that will inform their decisions and actions both now and in the future. (SPHE Curriculum Guidelines 1999 p.2)

*The strands and strand units for SPHE are as follows:*

Strand	Strand Units
Myself	Self-identity
	Taking care of my body
	Growing and changing
	Safety and protection
	Making decisions(3 <sup>rd</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> class only)
Myself and Others	Myself and my family
	My friends and other people
	Relating to others
Myself and the Wider World	Developing citizenship
	Media Education

Schools are encouraged to implement a two-year plan which includes aspects of all three strands in each year. In this way the child will receive a comprehensive SPHE programme over two years.

### 1.1 Aistear - The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework

Early childhood marks the beginning of a lifelong journey of development and lays the foundations for positive healthy learning and well-being. Aistear (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2010) is the curriculum framework for children from birth to six years in Ireland. The Framework also provides guidelines on supporting children's learning through partnerships with parents, interactions, play, and assessment. Important themes within this curriculum include well-being, identity and belonging. The foundations of well-being which are developed through the Aistear Programme are further enhanced throughout the child's school years. While all aspects of school life have the potential to promote personal, and social development, the full implementation of SPHE provides a framework for educating young people about their health and well-being in a planned and structured way.

## ***1.2 Key Factors for Successful Implementation of SPHE***

The Report to of the Inspectorate Evaluation Studies of SPHE in Primary Schools (2009) outlines the following key factors necessary for successful implementation of SPHE and demonstrates the link between SPHE and the HSE Health Promoting School Approach.

- Whole school planning
- Teacher classroom planning and monthly progress records
- The provision of a rich environment for SPHE
- Teachers' professional development
- The cultivation of a positive school and classroom climate
- Implementation and review of anti-bullying policies
- Curriculum implementation
- The quality of teaching and learning

## ***2. DES Programmes which support SPHE implementation***

The DES has provided a number of programmes which support schools in delivering the SPHE curriculum

### ***2.1 Stay Safe Programme***

The Child Abuse Prevention Programme (CAPP)-Stay Safe is a primary school based approach to the prevention of child abuse. The aim of the programme is to reduce vulnerability to child abuse and bullying through the provision of a personal safety education programme for students at primary school level, continuing professional development for teachers, and training for Boards of Management and information sessions for parents. The Stay Safe programme itself is a personal safety skills programme designed for use with primary school students from Junior Infants through to 6th class. The programme seeks to enhance students' self-protective skills by participation in lessons on safe and unsafe situations, bullying, inappropriate touch, secrets, telling and stranger danger. The programme aims to give students the skills necessary to enable them to recognise and resist abuse/victimisation and teaches them that they should always tell (an adult that can help) about any situation which they find unsafe, upsetting, threatening, dangerous or abusive. The DES ***Circular 0065/2011 Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*** requires that all primary schools fully implement the Stay Safe programme.

The Stay Safe Programme is currently being up-dated and will be available in 2015. For further information: [staysafe@pdst.ie](mailto:staysafe@pdst.ie) / [www.staysafe.ie](http://www.staysafe.ie); Tel: 01 6206347

## ***2.2 Walk Tall Programme***

The original Walk Tall classroom materials were devised in the mid-1990s on foot of a Ministerial Task Force Report (1996) which recommended that substance misuse preventative strategies should be put in place as early as possible in the classroom. The original aims of the Walk Tall programme were to give students the confidence, skills, attitudes and knowledge to make healthy choices in their lives. The updated programme has been broadened in terms of tailoring the classroom materials to a more diverse pupil population, updating some of the content (e.g. stories), and making the link between Walk Tall and the content objectives of the SPHE Curriculum (1999) more explicit in order to assist classroom planning. The Programme combines skills, knowledge, values and attitudes in an age-appropriate, developmental set of materials which is both practical and comprehensive. The content is delivered through a variety of active learning strategies, all of which facilitate engagement and enjoyment by pupils. Detailed lesson plans are provided to support the class teacher in delivery of the Programme. The Programme now covers many aspects of the SPHE curriculum. For further information: [healthandwellbeing@pdst.ie](mailto:healthandwellbeing@pdst.ie) ; Tel 053-9239105

## ***2.3 Relationships and Sexuality Education***

The Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) resource materials are based on the Interim Curriculum and Guidelines for Relationships and Sexuality Education prepared by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. RSE is part of SPHE. RSE provides children with structured opportunities to develop the knowledge, attitudes, values, beliefs and practical skills necessary to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships as children and, subsequently, as adults. RSE seeks to provide children with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of relationships and human sexuality, through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework agreed upon by the partnership of parents/guardians, teachers and Boards of Management during the formulation of an RSE policy in each school. There are two Strands in the RSE Curriculum and Guidelines: "Myself" and "Myself and Others". Within these Strands the topics are arranged in Strand Units. Under "Myself" the Strand Units include self-esteem, growing and changing, new life, feelings and emotions, keeping safe and making decisions.

Under “Myself and Others” the topics are based on relationships with family, friends and other people. For further information: [healthandwellbeing@pdst.ie](mailto:healthandwellbeing@pdst.ie) ; Tel 053-9239105

### ***3. Evidence-based intervention programmes that promote well-being***

There are many evidence-based programmes which have been developed to promote resilience and social and emotional competence. Below are examples of some evidence programmes which have been implemented in Irish schools. There are many others targeting well-being and resilience. Schools can seek advice on the evidence base for other programmes, which may be offered locally, on the following websites <http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/> and <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

Schools are advised that they must map the content of any such programmes onto their SPHE school policy and SPHE classroom planning. This is to ensure that there is clarity regarding the content objectives of the particular strand unit/s which are met by the programme and those that are not. The content objectives of the particular strand unit/s being explored should always direct the focus for teaching and learning.

#### ***3.1 The Incredible Years Programmes***

The Incredible Years Programmes were developed by Professor Carolyn Webster-Stratten (University of Washington, Seattle) as early prevention programmes that children, parents and teachers of young children can use to promote social, emotional and academic competencies. The Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management (TCM) programme is a classroom-based intervention designed to reduce conduct problems and promote children’s pro-social behaviour by strengthening classroom management strategies. The programme has been evaluated by Archways and the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. The findings point toward the overall utility and cost-effectiveness of the IY TCM programme in an Irish context. The programme led to improvements in the classroom environment, including a reduction in teacher reported stress and negative classroom management strategies, as well as fewer instances of disruptive behaviour among pupils in the classroom. [www.incredibleyears.com](http://www.incredibleyears.com)

NEPS psychologists are trained to deliver the Classroom Management Programmes training to teachers.

The Teacher Classroom Management Programme is complemented by a classroom curriculum (Classroom Dinosaur Curriculum), training for which is available through Archways and some local partnerships.

### ***3.2 Zippy's Friends***

The Zippy's Friends Programme is designed to promote the emotional well-being of children aged five to eight years by increasing their repertoire of coping skills and by stimulating varied and flexible ways of coping with problems of day-to-day life. It has been proven to support the implementation of the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum for junior classes. Comprised of six modules, the programme addresses the following themes: feelings, communication, making and breaking relationships, conflict resolution, dealing with change and loss, and general coping skills. Structured into sessions, the programme is supported by a teacher's manual and an attractive set of teaching materials, which are designed to actively engage the children in a range of child-centered activities. Teachers participate in a structured training programme with the support of the Department of Education and Science and the Health Service Executive before implementing the programme in class. The Zippy's Friends programme has been evaluated (Clarke, A. M. & Barry, M., 2010) through the Health Promotion Research Centre, the National University of Galway, Ireland. Schools participating in the HSE health promoting schools may access training in this programme.

### ***3.3 Friends for Life***

The Friends Programmes, Fun Friends and Friends for Life are school based childhood anxiety prevention and resilience building programme developed by Dr. Paula Barrett in Australia. The World Health Organisation cites Friends for Life as the only evidence based programme effective at all levels of intervention for anxiety for children (WHO, 2004). This programme helps students to develop effective strategies to deal with worry, stress and change, and teaches children how to cope with, and manage stress and anxiety both now and in later life. The programme can be run by teachers as a whole class programme, or small group intervention. NEPS psychologists are trained to train teachers to deliver the programmes in schools. For information on NEPS research on implementation of the programme by Irish primary teachers please use the links below:

<http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/NEPS-Presentation-on-FRIENDS-for-Life-for-NCSE-Conference.ppt>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHYNhUlyyPA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDj1ny98hp0>

## **4. Other DES approved programmes and initiatives that support implementation of SPHE**

### **4.1 Webwise Primary Programme**

The Webwise Primary School Programme is specifically designed for primary school teachers who wish to introduce internet safety when teaching the SPHE curriculum. This Education Programme has been developed to assist and support educators teaching students about the safe and responsible uses of the Internet. It is envisaged that the Webwise Education Programme will be taught as part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum in schools for students between the ages of 8 and 12. To order a free copy hard copy or download the resource visit: [www.webwise.ie/teachers/resources/](http://www.webwise.ie/teachers/resources/)

### **4.2 Webwise Anti-Cyber Bullying Primary Pack:**

Webwise, the internet safety initiative of the PDST, developed the **Webwise Anti-Cyber Bullying Pack - MySelfie** in 2014 to help schools to engage upper primary school students on the topic of cyber bullying. This pack supports schools with the prevention and awareness raising measures on all aspects of cyber bullying required by the Action Plan on Bullying. This resource aims to give pupils opportunities to recognise cyber bullying and empathise with the people involved in cyber bullying, to encourage them to act responsibly online and seek help when they encounter cyber bullying, and explore the strong emotions that can lead to and be caused by cyber bullying. The centrepiece of the resource are three animated case studies and associated lesson plans that help teachers to integrate the topic of cyber bullying into the implementation of the SPHE curriculum in their school.

The resource helps students develop the necessary skills and understanding to be responsible, socially conscious and effective internet users, as they explore social networks for the first time. In particular, it helps teachers to build empathy, respect and resilience in students. To order a free copy hard copy or download the resource visit: [www.webwise.ie/myselfie](http://www.webwise.ie/myselfie)



### **4.3 Garda Primary Schools Programme**

The Garda Schools Programme is an education programme for 5th class pupils in Primary Schools throughout the country. It promotes sensible and responsible behaviour and fosters a positive attitude towards the Gardaí. It achieves this through visiting the classroom and engaging in discussion with the students. The programme consists of a series of presentations given to the school students by their local Gardaí on the role of the Garda, road/cycle safety, bullying, vandalism, personal safety, drugs and crime prevention. In 2012, the Garda Primary Schools programme introduced a new initiative called 'Respectful Online Communication'. This initiative addresses the personal safety issues that arise through communicating using media and technology. It aims to foster a sense of care and respect for others online and to equip students with the skills to deal effectively with cyber bullying. E mail: [schoolsprogramme@garda.ie](mailto:schoolsprogramme@garda.ie) 01-6663891 or contact your local Garda station

### **4.4 The Active School Flag Initiative (ASF)**

Recognising the importance of the link between physical and mental well-being The Active School Flag (ASF) is a Department of Education and Skills initiative which seeks to recognise schools that strive to achieve a physically educated and physically active school community. The ASF initiative is open all primary and special schools. In order to be awarded the Active School Flag, schools must provide the correct PE timetable provision as per DES Guidelines The Active School Flag will be awarded to schools that:

- Adhere to DES guidelines regarding PE timetable provision for all students
- Teach a broad and balanced PE curriculum
- Inform and invite the school community to participate in the ASF process
- Self-evaluate current provision in terms of PE, physical activity and partnerships
- Plan, implement and monitor improvements for each of the aforementioned areas
- Organise an 'Active School Week' as part of the annual school calendar

Schools should work to their own time frame in order to implement changes that will have real and tangible benefits. The ASF is a whole school process and schools are encouraged to look towards parents, the local community and outside agencies (HSE, LSPs, NGBs, PDST) for their support. Once awarded the Active School Flag remains valid for a period of three years. The Active School Flag is funded by the Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education and Skills and based in Mayo Education Centre. [www.activeschoolflag.ie](http://www.activeschoolflag.ie)

## ***4.5 HSE Health Promotion Programmes and Supports for Schools***

### ***4.5.1 Health Promoting School***

The Health Promoting School (HPS) Framework involves the whole school community coming together and working towards better health for all. It seeks to create a school environment that promotes health and wellbeing for all its members. The HPS addresses health in its broadest sense including social, emotional, mental spiritual, cognitive and physical health. Developing as a HPS involves putting in place policies and practices that enable the school community to develop sustainable programmes of action. The HPS process encourages schools to focus on four key areas of action; Environment, Curriculum and Learning, Policy and Planning and Partnerships. Schools are supported to develop as Health Promoting Schools by HSE Health Promotion Officers. For further information please contact local health promotion office or visit [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie) schools.

### ***4.5.2 Suicide Prevention Officers:***

HSE Suicide Prevention Officers can support the mental health promotion and suicide prevention role of schools in the following ways:

- Coordinating and providing whole – school SafeTalk training
- Providing details of ASIST and Understanding Self – Harm
- Providing consultative service for principals and/or guidance counsellors on issues related to mental health or suicide prevention

#### ***Understanding Self – Harm***

Understanding Self – Harm is an evaluated awareness programme that increases participants' knowledge about self – harm. It is an interactive one day programme suitable for whole – school staff and is delivered free of charge to schools by the Health Services.

#### ***(ASIST) Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training***

ASIST is a two – day interactive workshop in suicide first – aid. It is a training programme suitable for key school staff developing the skills to help prevent the immediate risk of suicide. The workshop provides opportunities to learn what a person at risk may need from others in order to keep safe and access help.

ASIST encourages honest, open and direct talk about suicide in preparing people to provide suicide first – aid. The programme is delivered in a multidisciplinary group and schools can access the course free of charge. Guidance counsellors, members of the student support teams, critical incident management team, and subject teachers are encouraged to avail of the ASIST and Safe-TALK Programmes.

### ***Safe-TALK***

Safe-TALK is a half – day work shop aimed at increasing participants’ knowledge and skills around suicide alertness. It teaches participants to be more alert to the signs of suicide and covers the basic steps that a teacher or other staff members may undertake if concerned about a young person. SafeTalk is best delivered to a whole - school staff. Schools must have some key people trained in the ASIST Programme before a Safe-TALK Programme may be presented to a whole – school staff. Safe-TALK is delivered free of charge to schools by the Health Services. Information on local services is available on the HSE infoline – callsave 1850 24 1850 and more details on the above supports for schools is available at the following link

[www.YourMentalHealth.ie](http://www.YourMentalHealth.ie)

### ***4.6 Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties-A Continuum of Support – Guidelines for Primary Schools (NEPS 2010)***

These guidelines provide a whole-school framework and overview of the classroom supports and structures which promote social and emotional competence along with a graduated problem approach to intervention with pupils exhibiting social, emotional and or behavioural difficulties. The Guidelines are available at the following link:

[http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps\\_besd\\_continuum\\_teacher\\_guide.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_besd_continuum_teacher_guide.pdf)

An exhaustive review of the many other programmes and initiatives that promote well-being and support the implementation of SPHE is beyond the scope of the current booklet. A further list of resources is available at <http://www.pdst.ie/node/810>

## ***5. Using external resources and speakers***

National and international research has consistently shown that the qualified classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and that s/he can have a powerful impact on influencing students' attitudes, values and behaviour in all aspects of health education. School management, principals and teachers have a duty to provide the best quality and most appropriate SPHE for their students. They also have a duty to protect students in their care at all times from any potentially harmful, inappropriate or misguided resources, interventions or programmes.

The DES issued *Circular 22/2010 (Primary) 'Social Personal and Health Education, Best Practice Guidelines'* to schools setting out guidance for the use of external resources in the context of the SPHE and RSE programmes. These circulars outline clearly the requirements of schools with regard to inviting visitors or guest speakers to work with students.

# TEN ACTIONS TO PROMOTE THE WELL-BEING OF A SCHOOL COMMUNITY

- 1** Developing and maintaining a safe, caring culture and climate within the school where a sense of belonging and connectedness is fostered.
- 2** Building positive relationships between teachers and children to promote participation, social interaction and pro-social behaviour.
- 3** Adopting a whole-school approach to health promotion, where health is promoted by all and not just by a few members of staff.
- 4** Actively involving children, their parents/guardians and the wider community in developing and implementing school policies to support mental health and health promotion.
- 5** Supporting and implementing a well-planned, consistent and integrated SPHE curriculum to enable children enhance their coping, resilience, communication, conflict resolution, and problem-solving skills.
- 6** Developing whole-school systems and structures to support the early identification of children experiencing social, emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties.
- 7** Actively involving, supporting and encouraging children's participation in extra-curricular activities.
- 8** Fostering a whole-school ethos that accepts and values diversity within the pupil and staff population.
- 9** Providing easy access to information for pupils and staff on supports available to them within the school and wider community.
- 10** Facilitating access to continuing professional development for school staff on the promotion of the mental health and well-being of children.

