Implementation of Social, Personal & Health Education at Junior Cycle

National Survey Report
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National Survey Report

Report compiled by
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Report commissioned by the SPHE Support Service (Post-primary)
We would like to acknowledge the principals, teachers and co-ordinators who took the time to complete surveys. It is much appreciated.

We gratefully acknowledge the work of Lisa Kiely, post graduate researcher at the University of Limerick.
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Preface

This report presents the results from the national survey into the implementation of Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) in second level schools since its introduction in 2000. The report was commissioned by the management team for the implementation of SPHE at Junior Cycle. This management team comprises of a partnership between the Department of Health and Children and The Department of Education and Science. The report outlines the views of principals, teachers/coordinators of SPHE and those not involved in the teaching of SPHE. The main areas explored were provision of SPHE within schools, teacher selection, the support service, implementation issues and content relevance. It is important to note that this survey was carried out during industrial action on the part of one of the teacher unions and this is reflected in the response rate to the survey. However, even in the climate of industrial action teachers and principals were still very forthcoming with their responses and provided many insights into the implementation of SPHE in schools.
CHAPTER 1

Background and Context

The introduction of SPHE in the post primary curriculum is set in the context of the educational principles that underpin the Junior Certificate. The Junior Certificate is designed to contribute to the development of many aspects of the person: emotional, intellectual, social, and moral, physical, aesthetic, creative, cultural, critical and spiritual. It aims to develop the individual’s personal and social confidence and a tolerance and respect for the values and beliefs of others with a view to the young person taking a positive role within the family workplace and community. This holistic vision of the person that is core to our understanding of education, health and well being is the foundation on which SPHE is designed, developed and implemented.

Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides students with a unique opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves and to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

(Department of Education and Science 2000:3)

The broad aims of SPHE are to promote self-esteem and self-confidence, personal skills, responsible decision-making, opportunities to reflect and discuss and to promote physical, mental, emotional health and well-being. SPHE is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge, attitudes and skills. The home, school and broader community have distinct but overlapping roles in their contribution to education in social, personal and health areas.

There are aspects of contemporary life that point to the need for inclusion in the school curriculum of a well developed SPHE programme such as current levels of substance misuse, teenage pregnancies, pressures on family life, self harming and death by suicide, bullying, risk taking and stress.

These contemporary issues need to be addressed by a school based programme not as a once off but through a curriculum that is age appropriate and connected to the language of the adolescent.

Children learn that in school they must not use their existing knowledge of the world but pretend that only the information given by the teacher is valid, so that they have to ignore many of the considerations that influence us in our everyday lives in favour of solving idealised logical problems posed by the teacher.

(Barnes et al 1994 :76)
The implications of matching adolescent language on health issues is a challenge for many teachers and in particular to traditional styles of teaching. The language (and terminology) used by teachers in the classroom is often not the same as the language of adolescents, this in itself can create a communicative barrier in the teaching of SPHE.

The rationale for the inclusion of SPHE as a subject in the Junior Cycle is primarily based on educational grounds but is also justified on the relevance of the school curriculum to pupils’ lives. Not alone the content but the methodology by which it is taught must be relevant to students’ needs. The drive therefore is to create curriculum appropriate to students’ lives. The manner in which schools traditionally organise teaching and learning is generally in the form of discrete units of knowledge termed ‘subjects.’

**Creating Subjects**

Technical rationalist approaches to education see educational systems classifying different forms of knowledge into ‘subjects’ and ‘curriculum.’ The etymology of curriculum indicates that curriculum is defined as “a course to be followed, or significantly presented” (Goodson 1998:25). ‘Class’ and ‘curriculum’ entered into educational discourse at a time when education was becoming a mass activity (Hamilton and Gibbons cited in Goodson 1998). Bernstein (1971) contends that how a society selects, classifies, transmits educational knowledge reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control. The process of establishing subjects as an expedient means of classifying and distributing knowledge can be perceived as a form of social control on the part of dominant groups in society. If curriculum can be perceived as a form of social control it raises many questions in regard to the introduction of new subjects, such as What is the motivation behind the generation of the subject? What intersectoral partners are interested? What is the articulated need of the professionals within the schools? of parents? and of students themselves?

The trend in post primary education in Ireland has been significantly towards technical rationalist approaches with an increased emphasis on technological and scientific curriculum (Lynch 1989). The distinctions between technical rational approaches to education and more practical and critical perspectives have been detailed by Carr and Kemmis (1986), who base their work on the contributions of critical theorists such as Habbermas (1978) and Foucault (1974) who argue that knowledge is not absolute but is rather a process of critical refinement. Technical rationalism conserves power with the knower (teacher) who transmits knowledge to empty receptacles (students). However, more critical perspectives seek to diffuse such loci of control giving the student more input in their process of knowledge construction and the learning process becomes less didactic and more predominantly a discourse between knowing subjects. Social Personal and
Health Education focuses not only on specific areas/themes of knowledge but also on the student/teacher relationship as being an important variable. The process of knowing becomes a dialogue between student and teacher developing the critical consciousness of both.

Layton (1972) suggests a model for the emergence of subjects in the school curriculum. The subject is placed on the timetable, usually justified in terms of utility that attracts the learners to the subject as they deem it relevant to their needs. The teachers are initially not trained in the area but bring much enthusiasm and commitment with them. Therefore, relevance is the dominant characteristic.

Academic work on the subject area then emerges, as do trained specialists from which teachers are recruited. While students are still attracted by its relevance, the growing reputation of the subject also begins to influence interest and the internal logic of the subject becomes increasingly influential of the selection and organisation of subject matter.

The teachers of the subject then become a professional body with established rules and values. The selection of subject matter becomes the preserve of specialists in the field. Students become initiated into a tradition of the subject. Layton (1972) warns of the danger of passivity and disenchantment for the students at this latter stage.

The growing need for the subject in schools adds pressure for universities to follow suit in the provision of the subject area most particularly in the area of teacher education.

The teacher within the school context who is involved in the implementation of the new subject is often enmeshed in a battle to promote the subject by “winning over the legitimating constituencies to ideological support and resource provision (Goodson and March 1996:140). Subjects that already hold academic status are according to Goodson (1998) well resourced within the school structure. This creates an imperative for the new subject also to gain academic status.

Basically, since more resources are given to the academic examination subject, taught to able students, the conflict over the status of examinable knowledge is, above all, a battle over the material resources and career prospects of each subject teacher or subject community.

(Goodson 1998:180).

Teachers are aware of the connections between patterns of resource allocation and the associated work and career prospects these ensure. Those teachers who engage in the teaching of SPHE predominantly do so out of ideological values and commitment to holistic education. The need to support such endeavours is vital to the successful implementation of SPHE as curriculum.
The Department of Education and Science (in April 2000) issued a circular (M22/00) stating its approval of the syllabus for SPHE at Junior Cycle that had been prepared by the National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NCCA). It outlined the intention to introduce the SPHE curriculum on a phased basis over three years, the circular also indicated the intention to create a support service for SPHE from September 2000. This support service was to be characterised by partnership between the Department of Health and Children and the Department of Education and Science. This formalised existing collaboration between regional health boards and schools in the implementation of health promotion and health education. The circular also acknowledged that many schools were already successfully implementing SPHE and that the support service would affirm and support these, and also "help and support other schools initiate and implement SPHE". Within some Health Board regions there was also active engagement in supporting schools in the areas SPHE lists as its core themes for the curriculum. Clearly, the rationale was to create a supportive structure (SPHE support service) to support teachers in their endeavours to implement the new curriculum.
Chapter 2

Social Personal and Health Education

Aims

The Department of Education and Science lists the following as the aims of SPHE:

- to enable students to develop personal and social skills
- to promote self esteem and self confidence
- to enable 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. (DES/NCCA 2000:4).

The aims of the SPHE programme focus primarily on the holistic development of the student, including the development of personal and social skills, self esteem, self confidence and of reflection and discussion, and not simply on the acquisition of technical knowledge.

In SPHE, the student and not the content is at the centre of the endeavour. The content is the vehicle, which stimulates the interaction between students themselves and between students and the teacher. This interaction is how young people learn. This method of learning called experiential learning and it is key to SPHE. (SPHE News 2001:1).

There is a moral framework to the stated aims, that of responsible decision making and holistic well-being. Within the aims of the SPHE programme is the desire to “...[assist] young people to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that will empower them to live healthy lives” (SPHE News 2001:1).

The curriculum content of the SPHE programme is spiral in nature in that it identifies ten key themes for each of the Junior Cycle years, which are revisited on a year-by-year basis with the aim of broadening the knowledge, attitudes and skills of the pupils participating in SPHE. Some of the themes identified are related specifically to the school setting such as Belonging & Integration and Self Management while others are related to both life within and outside school such as Communication Skills, Physical Health, Friendship, Emotional Health, Relationships and Sexuality, Influences and Decision Making, and others are more topic focused such as Substance Misuse and Personal Safety. The themes reflect an integration of felt, expressed and normative needs of pupils.
and teachers and programme planners.

**SPHE and Cross-Curricular Links**

SPHE as a subject is also deemed to link cognitively with material covered in other subjects such as human reproduction, growth, development and nutrition as is covered in the Science curriculum. In Home economics links can be made in the area of nutrition, adolescence, physical, mental and emotional health. Communications and communication skills are areas linked to Media Studies and English as well as SPHE. Clearly the potential for cross curricular collaboration between teachers abounds, what is significantly different in regard to SPHE are the methodologies employed in teaching which are facilitative rather than traditionally didactic. It is argued (Department of Education and Science 2001:4) that the personal and social learning provided by SPHE is also a prerequisite for successful learning, in that a student with high self worth and esteem and a positive self image will be better disposed to avail of school life and the learning situations it provides.

**SPHE and Health Promotion**

The traditional medical model approach to health, that of understanding health in terms of absence of disease, has now been replaced with a more holistic and dynamic interpretation (Naidoo and Wills 2000). Social Personal and Health Education is situated within the broader framework of European policy in this area. Contextualising health promotion within appropriate settings such as schools is deemed a strategic goal of health promotion generally (WHO 1986). SPHE is deemed to be health promoting.

> The SPHE programme provides students with dedicated time and space to develop the skills and competencies to learn about themselves and care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

*(Department of Education and Science 2001:4)*

**Whole School**

The SPHE programme should be supported by a school policy specific to SPHE and be influenced by other relevant school policies that are currently core elements of the School Development Planning initiative. The development of specific policy in relation to the implementation of curriculum such as SPHE gives the opportunity for all members of the school community to achieve clarity in regard to what it wishes to see implemented, and serve as a reference point from which to monitor progress and implementation (Lodge 1995). While SPHE is being developed as a distinct subject in its own right it is important to highlight that every teacher and every school activity offers an opportunity for the personal and social development of students. ‘Every teacher is a teacher of SPHE’ (Department of Education & Science 2000:6). A whole school approach is key to the implementation of SPHE. A climate of support within schools is essential if SPHE is to be embedded within the system. This supportive environment is characterised by the following
People feel valued, self-esteem is fostered, respect, tolerance and fairness are evident, high expectations and standards are promoted, support for those in difficulty, open communication is the norm, effort is recognised and rewarded, uniqueness and difference are valued, conflict is handled constructively, initiative and creativity are encouraged, social, moral and civic values are promoted.

*(Department of Education & Science 2000: 5)*

The role of the school Principal is also very important in influencing the factors that create a supportive school climate. Key issues such as allocation of class time, teacher selection and the allocation of resources are the responsibility of the principal. The manner in which these issues are addressed sends implicit messages about management support for SPHE or lack thereof.

**Methodologies**

The curriculum and guidelines place strong emphasis on the facilitative role of the teacher when engaging with students. The methodology of structured experiential learning endorsed by the NCCA for the teaching of SPHE is a significant step for many teachers to take. The provision of in-career development for SPHE teachers will be required to give considerable attention to the significant shift in teaching methods from that of teacher as instructor to teacher as facilitator of learning.

It is rare to find experiential learning underpinning a curriculum, rather than being an occasional leavening... The idea that formal (traditional) education might concern itself with the emotional and inner life of the person remains a curious and potentially risky idea to many.

*(Gregory 2002: 95)*

Experiential learning frequently takes place in the context of group work. There are ranges of specific skills required to facilitate groups effectively. Teachers using group formats should be familiar with models of group dynamics, also with group roles, stages and phases and the need for ground rules, the process of contracting (Tosey 2002) which serve to make the learning environment safe and secure for students. A range of experiential methods can be used in the teaching of SPHE. Levels of engagement on the part of learners require them to interact using specific skills such as listening and attention: methods intended to enhance state of being and awareness; creative thinking and accelerated learning; enactment, simulation and expression; encounter; increasing self awareness; group work; the imaginal; using imagination and intuition for inner exploration (Tosey 2002:108). The skills and the competency to use this range of experiences are not acquired quickly and are closely linked with the personal development of the teacher. Experiential learning is a complex process including the personal and the professional, theory, practice, action and reflection. The teaching of SPHE requires a high level of commitment from the teachers involved because it encompasses pupil centered ways of teaching, high levels of facilitation skills, the
comfort to explore topics that are closely related to the lives of young people, and the personal development and awareness of teachers.

**Assessment**

The assessment of pupils’ learning in SPHE is a source of information for both the teachers and the pupil. Current discourses on assessment of teaching and learning have highlighted the need for formative assessment. Formative assessment requires the engagement of both pupils and teachers with the focus on providing information about the nature of pupils’ progress, the difficulties of facilitating curriculum planning, with focus on what children learn and how they learn (Lawnn et al 1994). The assessment of SPHE requires teacher/self/peer engagement with the progress of learning.

Changing established curriculum is a complex interaction of changing roles and the dynamic of the actual change process itself. Effective implementation of SPHE must be coupled with a high awareness of the importance of relevant themes such as SPHE as health promotion, cross-curricular links, whole school development and interactive methodologies and assessment. The extent to which these become integrated within teacher practices and pupil understanding is the real measure of the success of implementation.
CHAPTER 3

Post Primary Implementation of Social Personal and Health Education Research Design

Focus of the Evaluation
The evaluation focused specifically on the implementation of Social Personal and Health Education in post primary schools. The purpose of the evaluation instrument was to examine the extent to which Social Personal and Health Education is being implemented in post primary schools from the perspectives of principals, teachers of SPHE and teachers who are not involved with the teaching of SPHE.

In ascertaining the implementation levels of SPHE in second level schools the evaluation instrument focused on:

- the level of integration of SPHE in the school’s timetable and within the whole school development in general
- the level and types of support provided by the SPHE support service
- the awareness levels of staff towards SPHE
- the relevance of curriculum content

From a national perspective the evaluation identifies the effectiveness of the SPHE support service in supporting teachers to implement SPHE and also identifies areas for the support service to focus on for future development.

Methodology
The methodology of the evaluation instrument is outlined below and includes: the aims of the instrument, the sample, the content of questions, response rate, and data analysis. Sets of questionnaires were distributed to each school in the national sample.

Aims of Evaluation instrument
The aims of the evaluation instrument were to examine the following: (i) category of school, (ii) if SPHE was offered in the school and if so was it a specific subject on the timetable or cross-curricular, (iii) if the school had an SPHE co-ordinator and if so was the co-ordination a post of responsibility, (iv) was there an SPHE policy in the school, (v) how was the policy developed, such
as levels and types of consultation and support from the support service in this area (vi) to ascertain the levels of awareness among staff of the SPHE support service (vii) to ascertain levels and types of support provided by the SPHE support service, (viii) relevance of SPHE curriculum content. Two additional sections were included at the specific request of the national co-ordinator of SPHE (substance misuse) and the national co-ordinator RSE (RSE Implementation).

Sample
Sets of surveys were distributed to principals, teachers of SPHE and teachers who are not involved with the teaching of SPHE in all post primary schools in the republic of Ireland. Therefore, questionnaires were completed by:

- school principals (see appendix A);
- co-coordinators/teachers of SPHE (see appendix B);
- teachers who are not involved in the teaching of SPHE (see appendix C).

The results of these surveys form the basis of this report.

Content of the Questionnaire
For the principals’ survey there were two main sections to the survey design. Section one focused on demographic information such as school type, was SPHE offered in the school? If so what years and number of classes were being provided? Selection of teachers to teach SPHE and in what way was SPHE being implemented? Namely was it a specific subject on the teacher’s timetable or a cross-curricular approach? Section two focused on the support being provided by the SPHE support service, existence (and drafting process if policy exists) of SPHE policy, levels of attendance of SPHE briefing sessions, difficulties in implementing SPHE and additional questions on substance misuse and RSE.

The survey for teachers of SPHE consisted of five sections. Section one focused on demographic information such as school type, was SPHE offered in the school? If so what years and number of classes were being provided? Selection of teachers to teach SPHE and in what way was SPHE being implemented? Namely was it a specific subject on the teacher’s timetable or a cross-curricular approach? Section two explored the existence of SPHE policy, general awareness of staff in regard to SPHE, how they became involved in the teaching of SPHE. Section three examined the support provided by the SPHE support service. Section four examined levels of training and section five explored the relevance of the curriculum content with additional questions on substance misuse and RSE.
Teachers who were not involved in the teaching of SPHE survey consisted of two sections. Section one focused on demographic information such as school type, was SPHE offered in the school? If so what years and number of classes were being provided? Selection of teachers to teach SPHE and in what way was SPHE being implemented? Namely was it a specific subject on the teacher’s timetable or a cross curricular approach? Section two examined general awareness in regard to SPHE from the perspective of policy, consultation with additional questions on substance misuse and RSE.

Generally the questions were forced multiple-choice questions where respondents were required to tick the box appropriate to their answer. There were also on occasion open-ended questions for respondents to elaborate on their responses should they choose to do so.

**Pilot Study**

A month prior to the distribution of the survey the instrument as well as the distribution procedures were piloted in schools. Surveys were distributed to principals, teachers of SPHE and those not involved in the teaching of SPHE. The purpose of the pilot study was to test the instrument and distribution procedure. Following the pilot study minor amendments were made on the recommendations of the pilot respondents.

**Distribution of the Surveys**

A letter of protocol was constructed and distributed via mail to all schools nationally accompanied by the sets of surveys. Reminder letters followed these after two weeks.

**Data Analysis**

The data were entered into the computer package Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). What follow are the patterns of responses (frequencies) arising from the responses provided.
CHAPTER 4

Summary of Main Findings

Report from the national survey on Implementation of Social and Personal Health Education at Junior Cycle

Introduction
This report evaluates the implementation of the SPHE programme from the perspective of school principals, SPHE teachers and co-ordinators and also from the perspective of teachers who are not involved in teaching the programme.

A postal survey was carried out with a response rate of 48% for principal questionnaires. Seven questionnaires were also returned untouched as a direct result of industrial action, others were simply not returned. Principal questionnaires represent the number of respondent schools as more than one teacher/co-ordinator may have replied from the same schools. Hence data from the principals’ questionnaires will be used when representing general factual information on, for example, school type.

Three hundred and sixty four questionnaires were returned from the teachers/co-ordinators of SPHE, while two hundred and twenty non-SPHE teachers responded.

Broadly similar questionnaires were issued to principals, SPHE teachers and non-SPHE teachers (see appendix A, B and C) in an effort to identify and evaluate their perceptions of the SPHE programme as well as the implementation process. The main areas examined are national availability and structure of the programme, allocation of time, in-service training and staff development, issues/difficulties in relation to implementing the programme, as well as the role and effectiveness of the SPHE support service.

Summary of Respondents - General Information
School Type
The data from the principals questionnaires were taken and tabulated in relation to background information about the school type and size. It was assumed to be the most accurate and reliable as every school has a principal while not every school would have an SPHE coordinator. Table 1 indicates the percentage response rate from each of the school types.
Sixty seven per cent of principals indicated that SPHE was indeed offered in their school with nearly one third of schools indicating that they were not offering SPHE. What is most interesting here is what emerges when the percentages offering SPHE are broken down by school type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School type</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>National Breakdown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocational/community college</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive + Community School</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

Table 2 outlines the percentage uptake of SPHE by school type in decreasing order. Mixed gender schools are the top three in this table while boy’s secondary schools fare least well at implementation of SPHE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
<th>No %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community School</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational/Community College</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary -girls</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary -mixed</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary - boys</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Schools not offering SPHE
In the qualitative sections of the questionnaire some principals offered the following reasons as to why the subject was not yet on offer in their school; ‘teachers untrained due to industrial action’, ‘curriculum overload, too many new courses’, and ‘timetable constraints’. A number of principals indicated that they were currently in the planning phase and they hoped to introduce it in the following school year.

Subject Availability
Of interest is the decrease in student participation identified as the years progressed from first year to third year with significantly less third year students having the subject on offer to them. The following table outlines the exact breakdown.
While it is not ascertained as to why this may be the case, it could be suggested that it is a result of the phasing in of the SPHE programme over three years or indeed it may be attributable to increasing exam pressure and priority being placed on examination subjects.

**Time Allocation per week**
The vast majority of students studying SPHE in first, second and third year are offered one class per week with just over 4% of schools offering students more than one class per week. The decrease in participation rates in the subject as the students progress in years can also be identified in this table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No SPHE class</th>
<th>One Class /week</th>
<th>Two Classes /week</th>
<th>Three classes /week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Year</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Year</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Year</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Structure of SPHE Programme**
Principals, SPHE teachers/co-ordinators and teachers not involved in the teaching of SPHE were all questioned on how the programme was implemented in their school; as a stand-alone subject, cross-curricular, both or none of the above.

An important point to note here is the general concurrence among all respondents, principals, SPHE teacher and teachers who are not involved in the teaching of SPHE teachers in relation to this issue. In seventy-five per cent of cases it is offered as a stand-alone subject with most of those students receiving one class period per week (table 4 identified). In twenty per cent of cases it is taught as both a specific subject and cross-curricular.
In the schools where SPHE is cross-curricular, principals were questioned on how it is co-ordinated. Approximately a quarter of responses indicated that it was either loosely or not at all co-ordinated. Typical responses included ‘not well, hit and miss’, ‘very loosely’ and ‘very informally at present’.

Principal in a third of cases indicated that teachers of specific subjects such as Home Economics, Religion, English, Biology and Science had meetings to ensure that all parts of the course were covered. Responses also indicated that some SPHE content was already being covered in these named subjects. In the remaining fifty per cent of cases, principals indicated that SPHE as cross-curricular was co-ordinated by a specific SPHE co-ordinator, year heads, class tutors, school counsellor or through the school’s pastoral care system.

Teachers of SPHE wrote several comments in regard to this area of provision. They indicated that a variety of cross-curricular initiatives were being worked out in schools.

Some schools were well supported by outside agencies as can be read in comments such as ‘We have Health Awareness events and talks, e.g. healthy eating week, aware talk, bodywhys for eating disorders, rape crisis centre talk, STD talks, hygiene and growing up given by external facilitator.’; ‘Health weeks. In 3rd, 5th and 6th years. In conjunction with religion teachers.’; ‘Talks (healthy eating, Bodywhys, Depression, Rape Crisis Centre, STDs Hygiene’.

Links with the religion teachers were frequent. ‘The religion teacher teaches it alongside 2 religion classes with the group’; ‘Religion / Home Economics / Biology Teacher meetings’; ‘Through religion; RE Teacher; 1 class of 3 religion classes’; ‘First years - have a co-ordinator. Second and third - use the first year co-ordinator who holds meetings with the religion teachers.’
Implementation with other subjects or taking students out of class was another theme that emerged. 'Elements of full course allotted to different subjects' ; 'Put with another subject - students taken out of class' ; 'Teacher of Home Economics and SPHE (curriculum overlap, e.g. personal hygiene / skin / teeth)' ; 'Meetings between teachers in appropriate subject areas and a co-ordination of what and when we cover different cross-over topics will be 2002-03' ; 'Through discussion with colleagues topics are covered cross-curricular' ; 'A single subject but cross-curricular during events such as anti-drugs week or anti-bullying week. Subject teachers are invited to establish and teach issues relating to SPHE' ; '1 class - students taken out for a number of weeks' ; 'Linked with religion and CSPE, Science and Home Economics attempt to teach similar topics at some time.'

SPHE Co-ordinator
Seventy seven per cent of principals stated that there is a SPHE co-ordinator in their schools. However, only thirty five percent of those are designated a post of responsibility in SPHE. In two thirds of schools SPHE is co-ordinated by a teacher carrying out the role in their own time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPHE co-ordinator a post of responsibility.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

Selection of Teachers to teach SPHE
Both principals and SPHE co-ordinators/teachers were questioned on how certain teachers were selected for involvement in either teaching or co-ordinating SPHE. The results are summarised in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Teacher Selection</th>
<th>Principals perception</th>
<th>Co-ordinators perception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher self-selected</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal selected</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6

Principals indicated that in approximately fifty per cent of cases teachers self-selected in some form while the other fifty per cent of time it was the principals exclusively who had requested teachers to teach or co-ordinate the subject.
SPHE teachers/co-ordinators on the other hand identified ‘principal selected’ solely as the more dominant mode of selection with just forty three per cent indicating their personal involvement in the selection process. In numerical terms seventy extra teachers/co-ordinators indicated that they were selected by the principal only and had no say in their involvement in the subject.

When teachers/co-ordinators were asked directly whether it was their choice to teach SPHE, almost one quarter (83 teachers) stated that it was not their choice. Clearly this is not the most suitable or satisfactory method of engaging participation and obviously would not promote successful implementation. Principals were not questioned as to why participation was not voluntary. The data suggests a less collaborative and more autocratic approach seems the more likely situation as opposed to the principals’ more democratic perception of the selection process.

**SPHE Support Service - General Awareness Among Teachers**

A section of all three questionnaires dealt with teacher’s awareness of the existence and role of the SPHE support service. Principals and SPHE co-ordinators/teachers were asked directly whether they were aware of the service while teachers who did not teach SPHE were questioned on who it was that had briefed them on the programme.

What emerged (quite positively) for the support service in this section was the very high level of awareness amongst principals and teachers. Over twenty-five per cent of non-SPHE teachers also indicated that they had been briefed by the service. In the two years since their establishment, the support service appears to have reached an exceptionally high level of SPHE teachers in one form or another as nearly ninety-five per cent were fully aware of their existence. The following graph shows the breakdown of the responses in relation to the issue of awareness of the service.

![Figure 2: Awareness of Support Service for SPHE](image)
The work and effort of the support service is further demonstrated, in almost 60 per cent of cases relating to SPHE co-ordinators and teachers the support service initiated first contact through which the teachers became aware of the support available to them. The principal in twenty five per cent of the cases made the teachers aware of the support services existence, with the remaining fifteen per cent of co-ordinators/teachers initiating the first contact themselves.

Over eighty per cent of SPHE teachers/co-ordinators who have had contact with the support service indicated that the support service is giving them ‘some’ or ‘a lot’ of help to cope sufficiently with the programme.

Fewer than eight per cent of teachers/co-ordinators felt that the support service was giving them ‘no help’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No help</th>
<th>Very little help</th>
<th>Some Help</th>
<th>A lot of help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7

**SPHE Implementation - Training and Support**

**SPHE teachers- training and support**

SPHE co-ordinators/ teachers were questioned on the level and type of support they had received from members of the support service. Figure 3 summarizes the extent of training received by those co-ordinating or teaching the subject.
Over half of all teachers or co-ordinators of SPHE have received over twenty-one hours of training. A further ten per cent have received between thirteen and twenty hours. The level of training received by those involved in the programme appears to be quite high which reflects very positively on the dedication and work of the support service.

Training and support has been offered to teachers in the main areas of resources, methodology, curriculum content clarification, teaching skills and whole staff implementation. In-service and training in ‘resources’ and ‘methodology’ were most frequent with support for teachers in relation to whole staff implementation less available. Table 8 outlines the exact breakdown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Support Received</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
<th>No %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Content Clarification</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Skills</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Staff Implementation</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8

Management - SPHE training and support

Principals were questioned on their own participation in information sessions or in-service in relation to the programme. Sixty five per cent of principals had not attended an information session since 2000, while eighty six per cent had not attended an in-service during the same period. The data draws attention to the low participation rates among principals and deputy principals at in-service courses, information sessions and briefings on the subject of SPHE. These figures are surprising given that one may expect the principal to have adequate knowledge of the programmes being implemented in their schools.

It was also the principals’ perception that fewer than twenty per cent of their staff could be categorised as ‘very aware’ in relation to SPHE. Given that the principals themselves would not be up to date with the details of the programme through lack of participation in briefing sessions it is not surprising that in the perception of the principals, approximately eighty per cent of the staff have little or no awareness.

Teachers not involved in the teaching of SPHE were also questioned on the general level of awareness among staff regarding SPHE. The data is outlined in table 9 and can be compared to the principals’ perception of their awareness. Some variations arise.
As table 9 outlines clearly, the level of awareness among the staff as a whole regarding SPHE is relatively low. What is interesting here is the more positive picture as described by the principal. However, it remains that only ten per cent of those not involved in the teaching of SPHE describe their general awareness as being high.

**SPHE Support Service and Policy making**

All three questionnaires included a question on whether or not a formal policy for SPHE had been drawn up in their schools. While there are some differences in responses from the three categories of teachers; principals, co-ordinators and teachers who do not teach SPHE; it can be taken that a formal policy for SPHE is drawn up in less than half of schools teaching SPHE. Nearly forty nine per cent of principals indicated that there existed a formal SPHE policy while a lesser figure of forty four per cent of SPHE teachers/co-ordinators identified a formal policy in their school for SPHE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is there a formal SPHE policy in your school?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal Policy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10

While the SPHE support service has obviously been very prominent in schools around the country in the initial advising and supporting of teachers, it doesn’t appear to have played a significant role in supporting the drafting of school SPHE policies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Service involved in drafting of SPHE policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11
Just over twenty per cent of SPHE co-ordinators/teachers indicated that they had developed the SPHE policy in conjunction with the support service with almost eighty per cent stating that the support service was not involved in the drafting of their policy.

Given also that more than half of all schools offering SPHE have not yet drawn up a policy for the programme it appears that the support service has little input in supporting policy making or follow up within the schools. A review within the support service in relation to their involvement in school policy making may be worthwhile.

Teachers were also asked about the consultation process in regard to the drafting of an SPHE policy. With regard to consultation bodies that schools engaged with, a variety of sources emerged. These ranged from 'no consultation' at all to ‘the Board of Management of the school’, which emerged most frequently. Parents and parent associations emerged as the next most frequent body consulted. The Vocational Educational Committees of the particular schools were next in frequency for consultation, followed by staff and finally the SPHE support service.

**Implementation of SPHE Programme in schools**

A main aim of this project was to evaluate the implementation of the SPHE programme and to identify principals, SPHE coordinators/teachers perceptions of the success or indeed ease of the implementation process.

Principals were questioned about the factors that they identified as obstacles for the implementation of the programme in their school. These factors are detailed in the following table starting with the one that was seen as the most problematic, curriculum overload.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Obstacles in Implementing of SPHE in Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Overload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time for co-ordinating/planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff feeling inadequately trained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequacy of support team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12
The above table indicates the high number of cases in which implementation was affected by teachers feeling inadequately trained to deliver the subject. In just under half of schools teachers feeling inadequately trained arose as an obstacle in the implementation process, in the perception of the principals.

This was verified in the SPHE teachers/co-ordinator questionnaire when they were asked if the received in-service is sufficient to teach SPHE. Sixty-two per cent of teachers felt that it was, while thirty eight per cent felt that the training/in-service was not sufficient to teach the SPHE programme. This feeling of being inadequately trained must obviously affect the implementation process. (See page 30/31 for respondents’ comments to further illuminate the data below).

Whole school implementation or cross-curricular implementation would also be problematic in an environment where principals were not themselves updated regarding the programme and also in an environment where there is little or no awareness among the general staff as table 9 outlines.

What must be highlighted at this point from table 12 is the very positive response given to the SPHE support team with only seven per cent of principals viewing their support as inadequate. This reflects the support that the team is offering to schools and teachers nationwide. Lack of support from the team did not arise as an implementation obstacle in the vast majority of the cases.

Respondents, in the qualitative aspects to the survey, elaborated on what they perceived as obstacles. In the spaces provided for teachers to elaborate on their answers comments on timetabling pressures emerged as most frequent. These are characterized by phrases such as: ‘Pressure on timetable’ ; ‘Timetabling - to fit it in with exam subjects’ ; ‘Lack of time, other subjects to suffer loss of time, lack of time for co-ordination / meetings’ ; ‘Pressure on timetable, parents looking for some academic subject’ ; ‘Overloaded curriculum / non-exam so it hasn’t got the same priority’ ; ‘Time factor with exam subjects. All teachers not willing,… or feeling incompetent to teach, it loses importance because it is not an exam subject’ ; ‘Timetable pressure, some class sizes, teacher fatigue with teaching it.’
Staff support was also identified as a hindrance. ‘Amalgamation, evolving ethos, industrial action, some teachers see it as a ‘doss’ class, never mind the kids!’ ; ‘Teachers are too busy / overloaded already’ ; ‘Too few staff willing to get involved in this area’ ; ‘Overloaded curriculum, lack of interest among all staff members, feel its outside their area’ ; ‘Large classes, some teachers / pupils feel it is a waste of time and a doss class’. ; ‘Seen as a ‘woman’s’ subject, no specific curriculum’ ; ‘Getting teachers who are willing to teach.’

Respondents also identified whole school development issues. ‘Lack of whole school staff initiation’ ; ‘Whole staff acceptance, although more staff members have offered to train and teach it last year’ ; ‘Lack of whole staff awareness, overemphasis on exam subjects, expectation that SPHE teacher gets inadequate amount of training or does this training in his / her own time’ ; ‘There should be policy involving all staff and students - no real commitment from principal, - just put it on curriculum and leave it at that - no real application’ ; ‘Not whole school.’

Lack of training emerged also as a theme. ‘Lack of training - time constraints, no time for preparation’ ; ‘No training - all teachers have 1 period per week except year heads - just handed a book’ ; ‘Untrained and uninterested teachers required to teach the subject’ ; ‘People not knowing course content or management not realizing how important it is’ ; ‘SPHE co-ordination not a post. No reduced hours to coordinate. Training needed for new teachers ; ‘Training for teachers - lack of’ ; ‘Lack of qualified teacher training’ ; ‘Teachers feel that they are not properly trained to teach / deal with specific areas of the course.’

Class size also emerged frequently. ‘Classes too large’ ; ‘Large class groups / location on timetable, class period / need more resources’ ; ‘Class size - this is the 1st year that we have small groups’ ; ‘Too many pupils in classes and too many subjects for completion in junior cycle’ ; ‘Classroom environment unsuitable for teaching methodologies used’ ; ‘Large number in classes now!’

Teachers were asked to elaborate on what they identified as supporting the introduction of SPHE

Support from management was deemed important in the comments provided by respondents. This is characterized in such phrases as ‘Awareness and backing of management’ ; ‘Management being supportive - time being made available for meetings, etc.’ ; ‘Principal aware of need for same’ ; ‘Principal saw a need for SPHE.’

Whole school support was also identified as important. ‘Consultation is necessary / time for planning / whole staff approach’ ; ‘Staff awareness and reassurance that the individual teacher will not be ‘left out on a limb’ ; ‘Attitude of staff’ . ; ‘Supportive staff’ ; ‘Whole staff
commitment / small grouping / selection of resources'; 'Whole staff awareness and support.'; 'Will require full staff briefing at least.'; 'Whole school policy + class to be taken more seriously.'

Teachers voiced interest in personal development as can be read in comments such as: 'Urgently need input on Personal awareness / development'; 'More weekend courses in Personal Development for myself.'; 'Development for staff.'

**SPHE Curriculum Content**

SPHE teachers/co-ordinators were questioned specifically on the curriculum content of the programme and how closely the SPHE guidelines were followed. Twenty per cent of teachers indicated that the guidelines were not followed very closely; seventy-seven per cent follow the guidelines closely while only three per cent follow them exactly. It appears as if the majority of teachers generally follow the guidelines but probably adapt them to meet the individual needs of their schools and students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Very relevant %</th>
<th>Somewhat relevant %</th>
<th>Not very relevant %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belonging and integration</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Health</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Health</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences and decision</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal safety</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13

Over three quarters of teachers of SPHE saw all the main themes in the programme to be very relevant to the lives of the pupils. Relationships, sexuality and substance misuse were seen as of most relevance to pupils’ lives with self-management seen as not quite as relevant. However, all categories were seen as important for inclusion in the programme. Teachers were also asked to identify which areas of the content they focused most on. Relationships and Sexuality emerged as
most frequent, followed by substance misuse, communication skills, influences and decisions, belonging and integrating, physical health, emotional health being frequently focused on. However, friendships self management, a sense of purpose and personal safety receives significantly less attention by teachers of SPHE.

Substance Misuse
When questioned on the emphasis placed on substance misuse within the SPHE curriculum two per cent of principals stated that no emphasis was placed on it, sixty five per cent felt that it was awarded some emphasis while thirty three per cent of principals felt that substance misuse was awarded strong emphasis within the schools programme.

![Emphasis awarded to Substance Misuse](image)

Figure 5

Ninety per cent of teachers/co-ordinators identified the topic as very relevant to the lives of pupils, while even ninety one per cent of those not involved in the teaching of SPHE were aware that attention was being given to the misuse of substances.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)
Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) was first introduced into primary and post-primary schools in 1995. Principals, SPHE teachers and teachers not involved in the teaching of SPHE were all questioned on the availability of an RSE programme in their school.

Data from the principals’ questionnaire will be used to describe RSE provision as it is assumed that it is the most accurate for prevalence statistics.

Seventy per cent of respondent schools have drawn up an RSE programme according to principals. Ninety per cent of those programmes are available to parents.
Principals were asked to outline the student year groups that the RSE programme was on offer to. The results are summarized in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RSE offered</th>
<th>First Year %</th>
<th>Second Year %</th>
<th>Third Year %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14

The availability of RSE to first and second year students is quite high but there is evident decrease in availability as students enter third year. Students are covering less in the area of Relationships and Sexuality as they move more into their adolescence years. It would seem likely that there is a greater need for the development of knowledge, attitudes and skills in these areas as the students reach third year.

**Additional Data**

Respondents were asked if there were any additional comments that they would like to make in regard to the SPHE support service.

Generally the additional comments were very positively disposed to the SPHE support service. These are typified by: ‘I find the SPHE support service excellent’; ‘It would be good if they would initiate visits to all schools for staff seminars and inform them about SPHE’; ‘In-services keeping teachers up to date with materials / methods available are always appreciated and hopefully will be ongoing. Being able to brainstorm and meet with other SPHE co-ordinators is also very valuable - swap resources success stories, etc’; ‘Very good in general - very supportive. In-service in RSE - to plan 6 lessons for 3 years, i.e. working in groups planning lessons’; ‘Very pleased with the support service after years of nothing!! Its up to us here in the school to plan - organize things a little more to avail of the help’; ‘An excellent course - well worthwhile’; ‘SPHE needs to be pro-active please, support service. It can be a lonely place at the coal face’; ‘Now that the SPHE courses are running in the school. I realize that I would like to have a 2 - 3 day in-service to cover / discuss some of the problems I have encountered. When I was TY coordinator, they had ongoing meetings during the year which I found very helpful. I feel this type of format would be necessary for SPHE teachers or for SPHE teachers to set up a teachers association’; ‘Have been of great benefit would like to see continued contact with the support service re: any new resource material, etc. If introduced at senior level - in-service.’

Some criticisms were also articulated. ‘A lot of promises made about contact with school and teachers and list of resources and money (£100) for such resources. No contact made - no list or resources received’; ‘SPHE is only a minor subject, in the broad J Cert curriculum. Does it really
warrant a support service?' ; ‘As a teacher who was involved in SPHE and asked to get out of it. I hated the in-service. I felt it was wishy washy of no real use’ ; ‘Could the support service visit schools - liaise with staff and those involved in classes?’ ; ‘We should all be made more aware of the course content and how it is taught; it spends its time on the philosophy of SPHE rather than methods of implementation and dealing with what can be sensitive issues - support service does not help at all on a practical level’ ; ‘In consultation with SPHE team I have found it difficult to find up-to-date, relevant (to our students) video material re RSE. What is available seems to be dated or else very “English”; ‘I have serious problems regarding funding suitable resources. I attended an evening on resources organized by the support team but found it very limited, expensive material without really knowing how useful they would be’ ; ‘In-service training is often very unsatisfactory, many teachers feel it is a wasted day, can be very repetitive and pointless. Does not enhance the view of SPHE as a serious subject.’

Some suggestions were made by teachers. ‘Would like to see more workshops on methodology to be used in the classroom. More intense training required before starting to teach’ ; ‘The gender issue must be addressed by Support Services. (1) Boys schools need SPHE. (2) Male teachers should teach SPHE. (3) RSE course must address male responsibilities in teenage relationships, respect for girls, responsibility of fatherhood and the macho culture / sexual pressure, they can place on girlfriends. P.S. Recent offer of 40 hours training in a teachers own time on Saturdays was amusing???!! If Dept is serious about this subject it needs to offer in-school regular training!’

‘X (RDO) and Y (HPO) provide excellent support in my area. However, in order to receive that support. I had to fight for time off to attend courses and also had to sacrifice much of my free time attending. Support services alone are not the answer to the problem. Some principals will not allow teachers to attend because of the problems associated with substitution’ ; ‘In the experiences of three teachers here it is a waste of time to try to carry out an SPHE programme with a full class group. It is only effective in small group, 15 max. It is inaccurate to speak of teaching SPHE. It is facilitated as in group work. This is the greatest difficulty for teachers: to change method, not teach and learn to elicit responses and participation from the students. The transition from the role of teacher to that of facilitator is the greatest challenge to training teachers’ ; ‘I feel that I personally and the school SPHE team should seek their advice and help more in forming a school policy. It is mainly due to a lack of time for planning that we have not addressed this fully. We have good intentions but haven’t got around to forming a proper plan yet.’
Research Significance

The research instrument sought to explore the implementation of Social Personal and Health Education in post primary schools (Junior Cycle). Clearly, principals, teachers/coordinators and teachers not involved in the teaching of SPHE felt the introduction of the subject to be worthwhile. There was general consensus in principle on the value of SPHE in schools with only one respondent of the total number voicing a query with regard to its relevance.

Provision

As the age groups of classes increases, the commitment to class periods for SPHE appears to diminish, with SPHE offered in 70% of respondent schools in the students first year of post primary school, decreasing to 46% for third years. SPHE is an emerging subject on the schools timetable and needs time to embed itself into the schools curriculum and to acquire subject status. Other factors such as exam pressures and timetabling problems may also contribute to this decrease but this limits commitment to SPHE within schools when the pressures of academia take over. It may also be influenced by the phased nature of the implementation of SPHE. At this crucial juncture students are experiencing levels of exam stress that are higher than previously experienced; they are making decisions about subject choices that will influence their careers in later life and they are engaging in more mature relationships as they move into young adulthood. Adolescence can be an important yet neglected period of development of health related behaviour (Millstein and Litt 1990 in Durkin 1995). Mid-adolescents may be perceived as typically healthy and not therefore in need of much attention or focus on their health and well-being, however, it is a time in which adolescents engage in exploratory behaviour and may be establishing patterns that endure well into adulthood (Durkin 1995). The themes of SPHE such as self-management, influences and decisions, and relationships and sexuality are of intense relevance at a time when school commitment to SPHE could be perceived to be decreasing.

Cross-Curricular

In an educational system where discrete subjects dominate, attempts at cross-curricular linkage were high. While SPHE is predominantly offered as a stand-alone subject it was clearly evident in the comments of respondents, that a variety of teachers and subjects have much to offer in support of SPHE and that many were willing to offer this support. These were predominantly teachers of
Religion, Home Economics, Science and Guidance Counsellors. Attempts varied in type from structured meetings to ensure topics were covered simultaneously to more informal ad hoc attempts. The need for whole school awareness and support for the programme is vital to cross-curricular success. It is rare for teachers to discuss their teaching and/or classrooms across subject boundaries; talk across classrooms that does happen is generally in regard to curriculum overlap. There is urgent need to develop the language, which overarches subject considerations (Watkins 1996:134). Such development will bring the cross-curricular experiences of teachers out of the realm of subject overlap and into discourses specific to the value of content. More specific focus in the training of SPHE teachers/co-ordinators on how to engage colleagues in critical discourses may serve to aid whole school implementation of SPHE and indeed in some measure combat the subject balkanisation which isolates many teachers within the staff room (Hargreaves 1992).

Co-ordination
Co-ordination of SPHE in schools requires time, structures for effective communication and the skills of working within teams. Both the cross-curricular aspect of the programme and the discrete subject of SPHE require co-ordinators to incorporate dissemination of information, the identification of resources, assessing in-career needs of teachers, evaluation of programme and liaising with parents and other agencies such as Health Boards as part of their repertoire of skills. The effectiveness of co-ordination of new curriculum is reliant on the extent to which co-ordinators are equipped with the skills of negotiation and implementation. Training in new skills and fostering a sense of commitment among teachers of SPHE has been part of the success of the early implementation phase. However, there is more to do. More systematic co-ordination of SPHE in schools is dependent on supporting the development of interpersonal skills and also skills in curriculum change among co-ordinators and SPHE teams in schools. A team approach to implementation with the coordinator in a leadership role will help to embed the programme more deeply within the school. The co-ordination of SPHE was a post of responsibility in only 35% of the schools providing it. Given the ecological climate of schools with the variety of tasks to be covered it is understandably difficult to create posts of responsibilities as one would ideally wish them to be. However, the implementation of a new curriculum is vital to the development of the school and needs to be imbedded within whole school policy. Expecting teachers to implement a new curriculum without the status of a post of responsibility or its financial remuneration relies heavily on the good will of teachers in post primary schools.

A post of responsibility would also serve to raise the emphasis and status of Social Personal and Health Education. The Department of Education and Science emphasise the objectives of restructuring posts of responsibility in second level schools as
matching the responsibilities of the posts more clearly to the central tasks of the school, the clear specification of responsibilities for various posts and the provision of opportunities for teachers to assume responsibility in the school for instructional leadership, curriculum development, the management of staff and their development, and the academic and pastoral development of the school.

(Department of Education and Science 2002:1).

**Gender**

Clearly the issue of gender needs attention as can be seen by the breakdown of the school types implementing SPHE. Comprehensive and community schools scored highest as the school type implementing SPHE and this decreases as the schools move into the voluntary secondary sector with secondary mixed schools scoring second lowest with secondary boys schools appearing weakest of all with 57% of them implementing SPHE. The problematics of gender and affective education has long been in educational discourse. Schools, it can be argued play a cultural role in the production of heterosexual hegemonic masculinity (Mac an Ghaill 1994). Pupils actively use aspects of school life as “symbolic resources to construct their gender identity” (Measor, Tiffin and Miller 2000:71). Clearly the relevance of the themes of SPHE are similar for boys and girls but this raises significant questions as the dominant educational practices appear to reinforce the construction of masculinity (Griffin and Lees 1997) as strong, less communicative than girls and less in need of affective education.

**Selection of teachers**

What is interesting from the data displayed in Table 6 is the various perceptions between teachers/coordinators of SPHE and principals. Principals perceived that 36% of their teachers who teach SPHE were self-selecting while 41% of coordinators believed themselves to be self-selecting. Principals perceived that they selected 51% of teachers of SPHE with 57% of teachers of SPHE indicating that their principal selected them. With regard to the selection of SPHE teachers as being a consultative process between two parties the figures are quite low with 13% in principals’ perception and only 2% in the perception of coordinators. This is a strong reflection on the empowerment of teachers within their work organisation but also on the authoritative nature of school management. Given Principals low participation in SPHE briefing sessions it is unsurprising that they are not au fait with some principles, that underpin the rationale of SPHE such as empowerment (a core principle of the Ottawa Charter WHO 1986). The selection of teachers to teach SPHE in second levels schools warrants further research. As the introduction of SPHE is a multi faceted process clarity can be problematic (Fullan 1995). The lack of clarity by principals constitutes a significant problem at the early stages of implementation. “Unclear and unspecified changes can cause great anxiety and frustration to those sincerely trying to implement them” (Fullan 1995:70-71) A collaborative approach to teacher selection may have more impact on the success of SPHE than authoritative selection.
Training and Support

The SPHE support service was in general deemed to be very supportive of teachers attempting to implement the curriculum in their schools. The dedication and commitment was evidenced in the number of hours of training given to teachers (which was twenty one hours + to more than half of SPHE teachers surveyed) and indeed in their levels of awareness with regard to SPHE resources, which was also quite high. Clearly the support service has fulfilled its mandate to be present to teachers who needed their support. The partnership between Health Board professionals and Education professionals was evident in teacher’s awareness of and exposure to both. Some teachers of SPHE called on the services within the Health Board to support their implementation of SPHE. Training and support was mainly offered to teachers in the area of resources, curriculum content clarification, teaching skills and staff implementation. Resources and methodology were most frequently focused on, with whole staff implementation support less available (at only 14%).

There were, however, significant gaps needing attention. Considering the support service was still in its relative infancy and impeded by the ASTI strike the support of teachers was well effected. With regard to whole school implementation, policy development and briefing work with school management, these are directions the SPHE support service might focus on for future development.

A formal SPHE policy exists in less than half the respondent schools. Principals perceived the existence of policy to be slightly higher than teachers of SPHE. There were generally high levels of awareness among principals and co-ordinators and teachers of SPHE with regard to the existence of the support service, indicating the support service has raised their profile well nationally. The supportive service has clearly been proactive in its approach with almost 60% of SPHE co-ordinators and teachers indicating the support service had initiated first contact with them.

Curriculum Implementation—Some issues

The school curriculum is continually being required to adapt to address new concerns and academic disciplines. In assessing the impact of new innovations, evaluation of the issue as to whether a given need driving the innovation is important enough to warrant inclusion on the curriculum is imperative, but also evaluation of the need in relation to other constraints is important. Therefore tracking the success of the innovation (SPHE) in regard to fulfilling the need that drives its inclusion (addressing contemporary health issues, social and personal development and education) will help in reducing resistance to it. For example, teachers of other subjects who give up timetabled classes for SPHE are more likely to be positively disposed to doing so if they can be convinced of the success of the subject in meeting the needs of its students.

As expected curriculum overload was the most frequently stated problem by principals, with time for planning and co-ordination being the second most frequent factor. Creating a post of responsibility for SPHE would give the co-ordinator allocated time, which may redress this problem.
in some measure with the decrease in hours accompanying some posts. Staff feeling inadequately trained emerged as an issue in the perception of principals, with 45.5% citing it as an obstacle. 38% of teachers felt the training they received was not sufficient to teach the SPHE programme. Given that teachers are expected to implement a new subject of which they have had no formal input at degree level it is unsurprising that some teachers may feel inadequately trained.

**Curriculum relevance**

Clearly the teachers and co-ordinators deemed the curriculum content to be very relevant. Regularly innovations are attempted without attention to whether they are priority needs; in this case the relevance of the innovation is evident. Teachers deemed Relationships and Sexuality Education most relevant and this is also reflected in the qualitative responses they added. Respondents were also asked to indicate which themes they focused on more with the students. The responses from participants with regard to curriculum relevance indicated RSE as the aspect of SPHE curriculum that was most frequently focused on, with self-management - a sense of purpose and personal safety as the least. Yet while these were the least focused on teachers still perceived them as important for inclusion in SPHE. The challenge for SPHE is to engage in continuous evaluation of the needs of students and to engage in consistent consultation with teachers, parents and school management to ensure that the content remains relevant.
References


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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Opinion Survey for Second Level School Principals

Evaluation of Implementation of Social and Personal Health Education at Junior Cycle

The following is a teacher opinion survey, which is designed to evaluate the implementation of SPHE at Junior Cycle. The University of Limerick has been commissioned to carry out this study. The survey is confidential and no school or teacher will be identified in the final report. It should take approximately no longer than 15 minutes to complete the survey. The findings of this study will serve to inform the SPHE Support Service on how they can better assist schools. Your co-operation with this study is very much appreciated. Please complete the questions and return the survey in the pre paid envelope before 29th April 2002.

Section 1

1. Gender: Male [ ] Female [ ]

2. To which of the following categories does your school belong?
   - Vocational/community college [ ]
   - Comprehensive school [ ]
   - Community school [ ]
   - Single sex secondary school (boys) [ ]
   - Single sex secondary school (girls) [ ]
   - Co-educational secondary school [ ]

3. Is your school:
   - Urban [ ]
   - Suburban [ ]
   - Rural [ ]

4. Is SPHE offered in your school? Yes [ ] No [ ]

   If your answer is no why not? ____________________________________________
5. If your answer to question 4 is yes, is SPHE offered to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No. of classes per week</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st yrs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd yrs</td>
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<td>Number of students</td>
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<td>3rd yrs</td>
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<td>Number of students</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6. Number of teachers teaching SPHE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. How did you select these teachers?

- Teachers self selected
- You requested a teacher to teach SPHE

8. In your school is SPHE taught as:

- A specific subject on the timetable
- Cross-curricular
- Both
- None of the above

9. If SPHE is part of your school's curriculum what emphasis is placed on substance misuse within it?

- None
- Some emphasis
- Strong Emphasis

10. Is there a co-ordinator of SPHE in your school?

- Yes
- No

11. If SPHE is cross-curricular how is it co-ordinated?

________________________________________________________________________________

12. Is the co-ordination of SPHE a post of responsibility?

- Yes
- No
Section 2

13. Are you aware of the support service for SPHE? Yes ☐ No ☐

14. Is there a policy in the school regarding SPHE? Yes ☐ No ☐

15. How was the policy developed?
___________________________________________________________________________

16. Did the SPHE support service provide help when the policy was being developed?
   Yes ☐ No ☐

17. If there was consultation who was consulted?
   Staff ☐ Parents ☐ Pupils ☐ Other ☐
   If other please explain _________________________________________________________

18. Have you attended any of the following since September 2000?
   • SPHE Information session Yes ☐ No ☐
   • SPHE In-career development Yes ☐ No ☐

19. Has the deputy principal attended any of the following since Sept 2000?
   • SPHE Information session Yes ☐ No ☐
   • SPHE In-career development Yes ☐ No ☐

20. Have the whole staff been briefed on SPHE by a member of the SPHE support service?
    Yes ☐ No ☐

21. What is the general awareness level of the staff in relation to SPHE?
    • Little awareness ☐ • Some awareness ☐ • Very aware ☐

22. How aware are you of the specific content of the curriculum?
    • Little awareness ☐ • Some awareness ☐ • Very aware ☐

23. Are all the staff aware of the specific content of the curriculum?
    Yes ☐ No ☐
24. Are the staff supportive of SPHE in your school?
   - Unsupportive
   - Indifferent
   - Supportive
   - Very supportive

25. Do you consider yourself supportive of SPHE?
   - Unsupportive
   - Indifferent
   - Supportive
   - Very supportive

26. How do you manifest this support?

_____________________________________________________________________________

27. What difficulties have you encountered in implementing the programme?
   - Curriculum overload
   - Staff feel inadequately trained
   - Physical resources
   - Time for co-ordination/planning
   - Adequacy of support team
   - Other

   If other please explain_______________________________________________________

28. How did the support service come to your attention?
   - Support service initiated contact
   - You initiated contact
   - Other

   If other please explain ________________________________________________

29. Has your school drawn up an RSE programme? Yes ☐ No ☐

30. Is the programme available to parents? Yes ☐ No ☐
31. Is your school currently implementing an RSE programme?
   • 1st years Yes ❑ No ❑
   • 2nd years Yes ❑ No ❑
   • 3rd years Yes ❑ No ❑

32. Does your school intend to implement an RSE programme to any of the following in the forthcoming school year?
   • 1st years Yes ❑ No ❑
   • 2nd years Yes ❑ No ❑
   • 3rd years Yes ❑ No ❑

Are there any additional comments that you would like make with regard to the SPHE support service?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. It is much appreciated.
Appendix B

Teacher of SPHE Opinion Survey

Evaluation of Implementation of Social and Personal Health Education at Junior Cycle

The following is a teacher opinion survey, which is designed to evaluate the implementation of SPHE at Junior Cycle. The University of Limerick has been commissioned to carry out this study. The survey is confidential and no school or teacher will be identified in the final report. It should take approximately no longer than 15 minutes to complete the survey. The findings of this study will serve to inform the SPHE Support Service on how they can better assist schools. Your co-operation with this study is very much appreciated. Please complete the questions and return the survey in the pre-paid envelope before 29th April 2002.

Section 1

1. Gender: Male □ Female □


3. To which of the following categories does your school belong?
   • Vocational/community college □
   • Comprehensive school □
   • Community school □
   • Single sex secondary school (boys) □
   • Single sex secondary school (girls) □
   • Co-educational secondary school □

4. Is your school:
   • Urban □ Suburban □ Rural □

5. Is SPHE offered in your school? Yes □ No □
6. If yes is SPHE offered to:
   1st years  Yes ☐   No ☐   No. of classes per week  1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐
   Number of students  ______

   2nd years  Yes ☐   No ☐   No. of classes per week  1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐
   Number of students  ______

   3rd years  Yes ☐   No ☐   No. of classes per week  1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐
   Number of students  ______

7. Number of teachers teaching SPHE
   1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4+ ☐

8. In your school is SPHE taught as:
   • A specific subject on the timetable  Yes ☐   No ☐
   • Cross-curricular  Yes ☐   No ☐
   • Both  Yes ☐   No ☐
   • None of the above  Yes ☐   No ☐

9. Is there a co-ordinator of SPHE in your school? Yes ☐   No ☐

10. If SPHE is cross-curricular how is it co-ordinated?
    ______________________________________________________

11. Is the co-ordination of SPHE a post of responsibility? Yes ☐   No ☐

Section 2

12. Is there a written policy in the school regarding SPHE? Yes ☐   No ☐

13. If there was consultation who was consulted?
   Staff ☐   Parents ☐   Pupils ☐   Others ☐
   If others please specify________________________________________________________
14. Is SPHE included in the drafting of the whole school development plan?
   Yes ☐  No ☐

15. Have the whole staff been briefed on SPHE by a member of the SPHE support service?
   Yes ☐  No ☐

16. What is the general awareness level of the staff in relation to SPHE?
   • No awareness ☐  • Little awareness ☐  • Some awareness ☐  • Very aware ☐

17. Are the staff aware of the specific content of the curriculum?
   • No awareness ☐  • Little awareness ☐  • Some awareness ☐  • Very aware ☐

18. Are the staff supportive of SPHE in your school?
   • Unsupportive ☐  • Indifferent ☐  • Supportive ☐  • Very supportive ☐

19. Is management supportive of SPHE?
   • Unsupportive ☐  • Indifferent ☐  • Supportive ☐  • Very supportive ☐

20. How did you get involved in SPHE?
   • Self selected ☐  • Selected by management ☐

21. Did you feel it was your choice to teach SPHE?  Yes ☐  No ☐
Section 3

22. Are you aware of the support service for SPHE? Yes ☐ No ☐

23. How did you first hear about the SPHE support service?
   - Principal ☐
   - Support service initiated contact ☐
   - You initiated contact ☐
   - Other ☐
   If other please explain

24. Was the SPHE support service involved in the drafting of the policy? Yes ☐ No ☐

25. Is the support service giving you the help you need?
   - No help ☐
   - Very little help ☐
   - Some help ☐
   - A lot of help ☐

26. Is the in-service that you have received sufficient to teach the programme?
   Yes ☐ No ☐

27. Do you consider the support from the SPHE support service to be:
   - Poor ☐
   - Adequate ☐
   - Good ☐
   Explain __________________________________________

28. What type of support have you received from members of the support service?
   (tick all boxes that apply)
   - Teaching skills ☐
   - Methodology ☐
   - Resources ☐
   - Curriculum content clarification ☐
   - Whole staff implementation ☐
   - Other ☐
   If other please explain __________________________________________
29. In your opinion how effective is the SPHE support service?
   - Not effective □
   - Somewhat effective □
   - Very effective □

30. What do you identify as the hindrances to the introduction of SPHE generally in your school?

31. What do you identify as supporting the introduction of SPHE?

Section 4

32. What is your level of training in SPHE?
   - 0-3 hours □
   - 3-7 hours □
   - 8-12 hours □
   - 13-20 hours □
   - 21 hours + □

33. Who provided that training and give approximate dates/year if possible?

34. Are you aware of specific classroom resources that SPHE team are offering?
   - Yes □
   - No □
   If yes give examples_________________________________________________

35. Do you use the resources in your teaching? Yes □ No □

Section 5

36. How closely do you follow the curriculum guidelines for SPHE?
   - Not very closely □
   - Closely □
   - Exactly □

37. How relevant do you think the following sections in SPHE are to pupils’ lives?

- **Belonging & integration**: Very relevant, Somewhat relevant, Not very relevant
- **Self management**: Very relevant, Somewhat relevant, Not very relevant
- **Communications**: Very relevant, Somewhat relevant, Not very relevant
- **Physical health**: Very relevant, Somewhat relevant, Not very relevant
- **Friendship**: Very relevant, Somewhat relevant, Not very relevant
- **Relationships**: Very relevant, Somewhat relevant, Not very relevant
- **Sexuality**: Very relevant, Somewhat relevant, Not very relevant
- **Emotional health**: Very relevant, Somewhat relevant, Not very relevant
- **Influences and decisions**: Very relevant, Somewhat relevant, Not very relevant
- **Substance use**: Very relevant, Somewhat relevant, Not very relevant
- **Personal safety**: Very relevant, Somewhat relevant, Not very relevant

38. Which of these ten themes do you focus most on?

____________________________________________________________________

39. How much time (if any) do you spend on the topic of substance misuse?

____________________________________________________________________

40. What resources specific to the topic of substance do you use?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

41. Has the support service encouraged you to evaluate their service to you?

   Yes ❑ No ❑

42. Has the support service encouraged you to evaluate your teaching of SPHE?

   Yes ❑ No ❑

43. Has your school drawn up an RSE programme?

   Yes ❑ No ❑

44. Is the programme available to parents for their perusal?

   Yes ❑ No ❑
45. Is your school currently implementing an RSE programme?
   - 1st years: Yes [ ] No [ ]
   - 2nd years: Yes [ ] No [ ]
   - 3rd years: Yes [ ] No [ ]

46. Does your school intend to implement an RSE programme to any of the following in the forthcoming school year?
   - 1st years: Yes [ ] No [ ]
   - 2nd years: Yes [ ] No [ ]
   - 3rd years: Yes [ ] No [ ]

Are there any additional comments that you would like to make with regard to the SPHE support service?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
Appendix C

Teacher Opinion Survey
(For a teacher who does not teach SPHE)

Evaluation of Implementation of Social and Personal Health Education at Junior Cycle
The following is a teacher opinion survey, which is designed to evaluate the implementation of
SPHE at Junior Cycle. The University of Limerick has been commissioned to carry out this study.
The survey is confidential and no school or teacher will be identified in the final report. It
should take approximately no longer than 15 minutes to complete the survey. The findings
of this study will serve to inform the SPHE Support Service on how they can better assist
schools. Your co-operation with this study is very much appreciated. Please complete the
questions and return the survey in the pre paid envelope before 29th April 2002.

Section 1

1. Gender: Male [ ] Female [ ]


3. To which of the following categories does your school belong?
   - Vocational/community college [ ]
   - Comprehensive school [ ]
   - Community school [ ]
   - Single sex secondary school (boys) [ ]
   - Single sex secondary school (girls) [ ]
   - Co-educational secondary school [ ]

4. Is your school:
   - Urban [ ]
   - Suburban [ ]
   - Rural [ ]

5. Is SPHE offered in your school? Yes [ ] No [ ]
6. If yes is SPHE offered to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Offered</th>
<th>No. of classes per week</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Number of teachers teaching SPHE

- 1 2 3 4+

8. In your school is SPHE taught as:

- A specific subject on the timetable Yes No
- Cross-curricular Yes No
- Both Yes No
- None of the above Yes No

9. Is there a co-ordinator of SPHE in your school? Yes No

10. If SPHE is cross-curricular how is it co-ordinated?

11. Is the co-ordination of SPHE a post of responsibility? Yes No

Section 2

12. Is there a written policy in the school regarding SPHE? Yes No

13. If there was consultation who was consulted?

- Staff
- Parents
- Pupils
- Others

If others please specify________________________________________________________
14. Did you feel adequately consulted with regard to the introduction of SPHE?
   Yes ❑ No ❑

15. Who briefed the staff on SPHE in your school?
   • Principal ❑
   • SPHE teachers ❑
   • Member of the SPHE support service ❑
   • Other ❑
   • No one briefed the staff ❑
   If other please explain

16. What is the general awareness level of the staff in relation to SPHE?
   • Little awareness ❑
   • Some awareness ❑
   • Very aware ❑

17. Are you aware of the specific content of the curriculum?
   • Little awareness ❑
   • Some awareness ❑
   • Very aware ❑

18. Are the staff supportive of SPHE in your school?
   • Unsupportive ❑
   • Indifferent ❑
   • Supportive ❑
   • Very supportive ❑

19. Is any attention given to the topic of substance misuse in your school?
   Yes ❑ No ❑

20. Has your school drawn up an RSE programme?
   Yes ❑ No ❑

21. Is the programme available to parents for their perusal?
   Yes ❑ No ❑

22. Is your school currently implementing an RSE programme?
   • 1st years Yes ❑ No ❑
   • 2nd years Yes ❑ No ❑
   • 3rd years Yes ❑ No ❑
23. Does your school intend to introduce an RSE programme to any of the following in the forthcoming school year?

- 1st years
  - Yes  ❑
  - No  ❑

- 2nd years
  - Yes  ❑
  - No  ❑

- 3rd years
  - Yes  ❑
  - No  ❑

Are there any additional comments that you would like to make in regards to the SPHE support service?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey. It is much appreciated.
Appendix D

Memo from the Department of Education & Science
To Management Authorities of Second Level Schools
M 22/ 00
To: Management Authorities of Second Level Schools

M22/00

Social, Personal and Health Education

The Department of Education and Science has approved the recommended syllabus for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) at Junior Cycle which has been prepared by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

This syllabus, and the support service which will be put in place aim to affirm, support and provide a framework for the successful comprehensive SPHE programmes which many schools are already undertaking and to help and support other schools initiate and implement SPHE. It is intended that the new SPHE curriculum will be introduced on a phased basis over three years in all second level schools from September 2000 so that all students will have the opportunity to participate in a structured SPHE programme. SPHE aims:

- to enable students to develop personal and social skills,
- to promote self esteem and self confidence,
- to enable 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.

The syllabus for SPHE will be sent to schools shortly and the Teacher Guidelines for SPHE will be sent in the Autumn.

The time allocation recommended for SPHE is the equivalent of one class period per week, (which most schools currently provide), organised in the manner that best meets the needs of the students and school organisation.

Support Services
The Departments of Education and Science, and Health and Children and the Regional Health Boards are planning an integrated support service for this initiative to build on the current collaboration. This support structure will be in place from September 2000 onwards. Details will be conveyed in due course when the arrangements are finalised.

Dissemination of Information
Please provide a copy of this circular to the appropriate representatives of parents and teachers for transmission to individual parents and teachers.

John Dennehy,
Secretary General.
April, 2000.
Appendix E

Memo from the Department of Education & Science

To the Authorities of Secondary Schools

PPT 29/02
Circular Letter PPT 29/02

To the Authorities of Secondary Schools

Revised in-school management structures in secondary schools.

Following a review of the in-school management structures and procedures the Minister for Education and Science hereby authorises the implementation of the revised in-school management structures and procedures in relation to posts of Assistant Principal and Special Duties Teacher in secondary schools in accordance with the detailed terms set out in this circular as negotiated between the ASTI, the JMB and the Department of Education and Science.

With regard to Par. (G) of Appendix 2 to this Circular, it must be clearly understood that a vacancy does not exist unless it can be accommodated within the approved schedule of posts as determined in accordance with the terms of Circular 6/98. In this regard, the posts of existing post holders who do not opt to undertake duties specified in the schedule of post duties as set out in Appendix 1 to this Circular are included in the schedule of approved posts.
DISSEMINATION OF CIRCULAR

You are requested to ensure that copies of this circular are provided to the appropriate representatives of parents and teachers for transmission to individual parents and teachers.

POSTS OF ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL AND SPECIAL DUTIES
TEACHERS IN VOLUNTARY SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Introduction

The Principal, Deputy Principal and holders of posts of responsibility together form the in-school management team for the school.

These proposals are aimed at improving significantly, through restructuring, in-school management in post-primary schools. The objectives of this restructuring include matching the responsibilities of the posts more clearly to the central tasks of the school, the clear specification of responsibilities for various posts and the provision of opportunities for teachers to assume responsibility in the school for instructional leadership, curriculum development, the management of staff and their development, and the academic and pastoral development of the school.

1. Schedule of Duties attached to Posts:

1.1 The national criteria for the level and types of duties to be attached to posts are set out in Appendix One to this Circular. The Statement of National Criteria provides that the types of duties listed are not exhaustive and may be elaborated at school level.

1.2 Duties should be of a curricular, administrative or pastoral nature and should reflect the grade of the post, taking into account the level of responsibilities involved in the context of size and needs of the school.

1.3 The Board of Management/Manager of each school shall, following consultation between the Principal and the staff, determine

(i) the duties which need to be performed for the effective internal management of the school, and,

(ii) the distribution of these duties between the available in-school management posts by reference to the national guidelines and having regard to the school's own priorities.

1.4 In allocating the duties to posts, the duties should be inclusive so as to be open to applications from all eligible members of the teaching staff.

2. Establishing a School's Schedule of Posts:

2.1 Using the national criteria for post duties for guidance, the Principal, in consultation with the teaching staff of the school, shall identify the post duties most required by the school and prepare a draft schedule of post duties accordingly.