

Primary School  
Curriculum



# Social, Personal and Health Education

Teacher Guidelines



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*Learning from  
and with  
each other*



## Section 1

# SPHE in the primary curriculum

# Social, personal and health education in the primary curriculum

*SPHE fosters the personal development, health and well-being of the child and helps him/her to create and maintain supportive relationships and to become an active and responsible citizen in society.*

## What is SPHE?

Social, personal and health education provides particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health and well-being of the child and to help him/her to create and maintain supportive relationships and become an active and responsible citizen in society. Through an SPHE programme children can develop a framework of values, attitudes, understanding and skills that will inform their actions and decisions in these areas of their lives both now and in the future.

From a very early age the child's social, personal and health development is influenced significantly by everyday experiences and interactions in the home. It is also affected by a number of other factors: religious and moral beliefs, the mores of society, the media, and the opinions of other people. All of these considerations and particularly the continuing influence of the family must be taken into account when developing and implementing a programme in SPHE in the school.

The school has a formative role to play in the child's social, personal and health education. It can provide the environment, the approaches and the variety of learning experiences that will help children to understand themselves, to relate to others, and to establish and maintain healthy patterns of behaviour. It can also contribute to preparing the child for active and responsible citizenship in the widest sense and for

being explicit about the values of a just and caring society.

The SPHE curriculum provides a consistent and comprehensive approach to specific aspects of the social, personal and health development of the child. It complements and supports work continuing in other subject areas and takes cognisance of the need for allocated time to address particular issues.

SPHE enables schools to build on existing good practice and to work with the home and the community in implementing a school-based programme. The involvement of parents in planning, reviewing and supporting such a programme will be crucial to its effectiveness. Regional Health Authorities and various professionals within the community can also support the school by contributing to particular aspects of the programme. Since SPHE has a moral and spiritual dimension, its development is influenced significantly by the ethos and characteristic spirit of the school.

## SPHE in a child-centred curriculum

SPHE fosters self-worth and self-confidence and places a particular emphasis on developing a sense of personal responsibility for one's own behaviour and actions. SPHE promotes self-awareness and understanding by helping children to name and manage their own feelings, to recognise and appreciate individual abilities, and to cope with change of various kinds. They can learn how to manage their own behaviour and to set and review personal goals within a safe and supportive environment. Such intrapersonal development will increase the child's sense of self-efficacy and help him/her to be more in control of his/her own life.

SPHE helps children to establish supportive relationships, to enjoy the company of others, and to resolve conflicts in appropriate ways. While in school the child can learn to be fair-minded and caring in his/her dealings with others and to be competent in operating in a variety of social situations. He/she can come to understand other people and the reasons why they act and behave in particular ways while also learning how to be more responsible in his/her relationships.

Health habits adopted in childhood will influence health and well-being both now and in the future. Developing health-promoting practices throughout his/her time in school can encourage the child to take increasing control over his/her own health and help to establish and maintain healthy behaviour from an early age.

SPHE provides children with opportunities to become aware of the various influences on their lives. They can begin to become critical of information they receive and more discerning about information they choose to access. SPHE explores how children can learn from and with their peers and can assist in developing the skills and attitudes that children need in order to cope with pressure from their own age group.

In a constantly changing society it is imperative that children develop a sense of belonging—of understanding where they fit in. When they feel valued and know that individual opinions and concerns are taken into account, they are more likely to understand the idea of community based on caring and a shared sense of responsibility. Experiencing the democratic process in action at school and in the community can help children to develop an understanding of democracy and how it is practised in everyday life.

Through SPHE children can learn about their own rights and responsibilities and the rights and responsibilities of others. They can begin to realise the interdependent nature of the world in which they live and learn to appreciate the role that each individual has to play in the local, national, European and global community.

Learning to care for the environment and to protect it for future generations is intrinsic to any SPHE programme. Children can come to understand the role of each individual and of the community in this endeavour. This aspect of the curriculum is complemented by the work that is carried out in social, environmental and scientific education (SESE).

Children live in a diverse society, and this diversity requires the development of mutual understanding and a sense of respect for the dignity of every human being. The SPHE programme provides a context in which children can learn about various ethnic, social and cultural groups and can recognise and appreciate the contributions of these groups to society. As they acquire a deeper understanding of their own traditions and heritage, they are encouraged to act in ways that foster inclusiveness and to have regard for the heritage and perspectives of others. Through SPHE children can discover the role each person has to play in counteracting prejudice, discrimination and inequality as they may experience it in their own lives.



### United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990

#### Article 29 (Extract)

**State parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:**

- (a) **the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential**
- (d) **the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin**

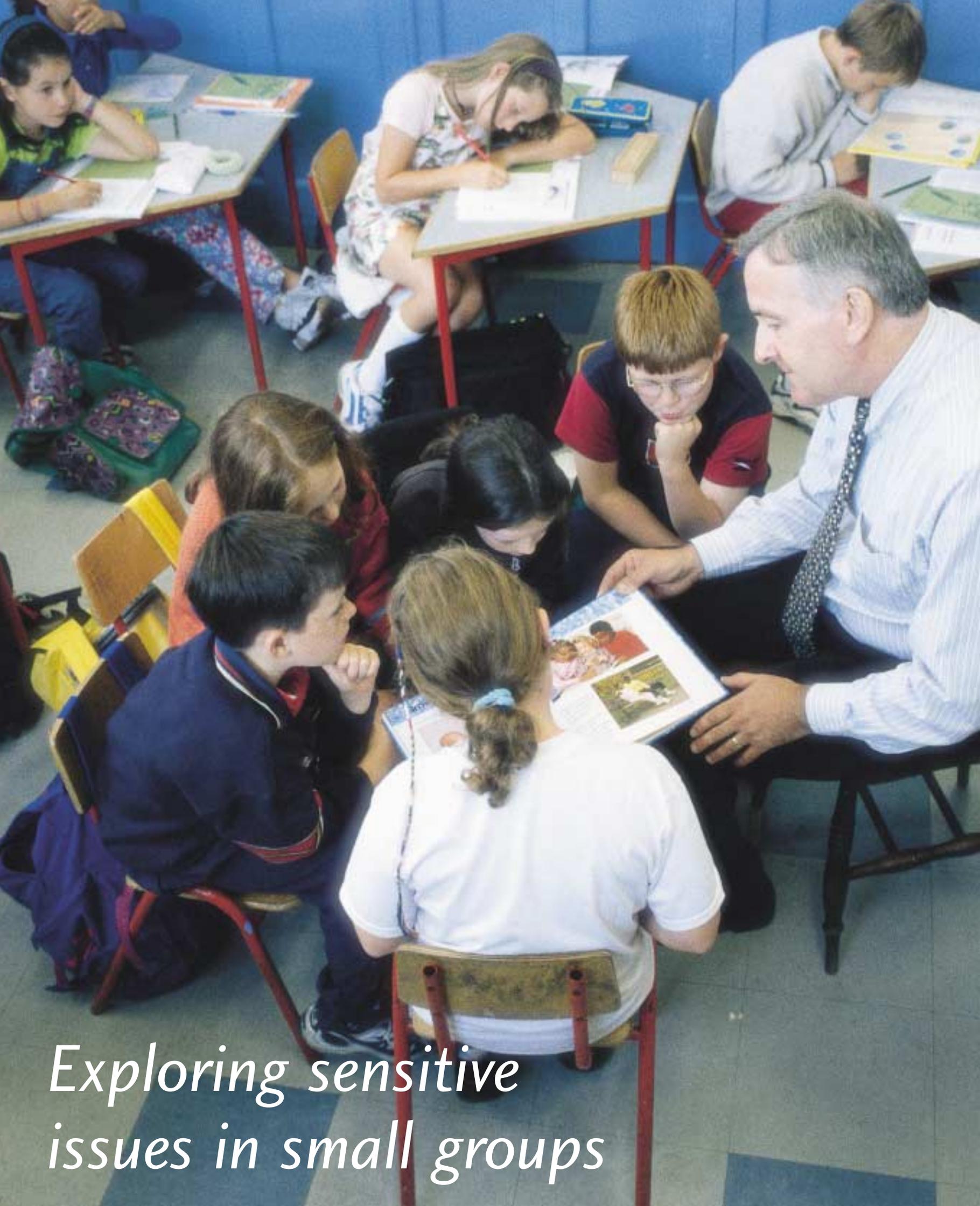
### The key characteristics of the curriculum are that SPHE

- is a lifelong process
- is a shared responsibility, between family, school, health professionals and the community
- is a generic approach
- is based on the needs of the child
- is spiral in nature
- is developed in a combination of contexts
- engages children in activity-based learning.

## The key characteristics of the SPHE curriculum

The key characteristics of this curriculum are outlined below.

- *SPHE is a lifelong process.* SPHE begins before the child comes to school and will continue long after he/she has left school. The emphasis in the primary school is on providing a foundation in SPHE, that will inform the child's actions and decisions and provide a basis for further development.
- *SPHE is a shared responsibility.* Parents, teachers, health professionals and members of the community all have a responsibility for the social, personal and health development of the child. Their contributions and involvement will be essential to the effective implementation of the SPHE programme in the school. The roles of each of these partners should be clear and understood by all.
- *SPHE is a generic approach.* Rather than treating topics in isolation SPHE aims to develop in the child a generic set of skills, attitudes, values and understanding relevant to a range of social, personal and health issues. This framework will be supported by specific information as required.
- *SPHE is based on the needs of the child.* It is essential in planning an SPHE programme, that priority is given to the needs of the child and cognisance taken of his/her environment. Appropriate adaptations should be made within the curriculum to suit individual requirements and individual school situations.
- *SPHE is spiral in nature.* Similar content is revisited at different stages throughout the child's time in school. This provides opportunities to consolidate and build on previous learning and allows for issues and topics to be explored and treated in a manner appropriate to the children's needs, abilities and levels of maturity.
- *SPHE is developed in a combination of contexts for learning.* SPHE is intrinsic to the learning and teaching that occurs both formally and informally in the school. To be effective it should be implemented in a combination of ways, through
  - the context of a positive school climate and atmosphere
  - discrete time
  - integrated learning.
- *SPHE requires children to be engaged in activity-based learning.* Children need to be actively engaged in the learning process in order to be able to use what they have learned in a variety of situations. Through active learning children can make sense of what they have learned and take increasing ownership of and responsibility for their own learning.



*Exploring sensitive  
issues in small groups*

# The content of the SPHE curriculum

# The content of the SPHE curriculum

## Strands of the SPHE curriculum:

- Myself
- Myself and others
- Myself and the wider world

The curriculum is structured in such a way as to treat the social, personal and health dimensions of the child's life in an integrated manner. It provides for the development of a broad range of values, attitudes, skills and understanding relevant to the child's health and well-being, to other people, and to the society in which he/she lives. This foundation will inform the child's actions, behaviour and decisions in the many situations that he/she may encounter and have to deal with as part of everyday life and living.

Because SPHE permeates all aspects of school life, the content outlined in the curriculum should be implemented in a combination of formal and informal approaches: formally through the discrete SPHE time designated on the timetable and other relevant subject areas, and informally through the everyday happenings in the school and in the context of the overall school climate and atmosphere. The professional judgement of the teacher will guide him/her in choosing the most appropriate way in which the objectives can be achieved.

## Basic structure of the curriculum

The curriculum is delineated at four levels—infant classes, first and second classes, third and fourth classes, and fifth and sixth classes—and is divided into three strands: *Myself*, *Myself and others*, and *Myself and the wider world*. Each of these strands is further subdivided into a number of strand units or topic areas that contain particular objectives, some of which are illustrated by exemplars. These exemplars are simply a range of suggestions and do not comprise a comprehensive list of activities and experiences.

The strand units are consistent throughout all the class levels, reflecting the spiral nature of the curriculum. As children grow and mature, the content is revisited in more detail, enhancing the skills, attitudes and understanding already developed and providing increasing opportunities for reflection and application.

However, while the content is presented in a manner that is considered appropriate to the child's age and stage of development, *flexibility* is recommended so that his/her emotional development and individual needs and interests are taken into account.

# Overview of content for SPHE

## The strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum

Strand	Strand units
<b>Myself</b>	<b>Self-identity</b> Self-awareness Developing self-confidence Making decisions <b>Taking care of my body</b> Health and well-being* Knowing about my body Food and nutrition <b>Growing and changing</b> As I grow I change New life Feelings and emotions <b>Safety and protection</b> Personal safety Safety issues <b>Making decisions*</b>
<b>Myself and others</b>	<b>Myself and my family</b> <b>My friends and other people</b> <b>Relating to others</b>
<b>Myself and the wider world</b>	<b>Developing citizenship</b> My school community Living in the local community National, European and wider communities† Environmental care <i>The sub-unit Environmental care is developed in detail in SESE.</i> <b>Media education.</b>

This overview illustrates how the SPHE curriculum is developed throughout the primary school. The strands and strand units are similar at all levels.

\*These units or sub-units are integrated in other strands and strand units in the curriculum for infants and first and second classes.

†This sub-unit is applicable only from third to sixth classes.

# The three strands of the curriculum

## Strand: Myself

### Strand units:

- Self-identity
- Taking care of my body
- Growing and changing
- Safety and protection
- Making decisions

## Myself

This strand concentrates on what is essentially the intrapersonal side of the child's life. It is presented in a number of strand units that focus the learning on self-awareness and self-development. The emphasis is on getting to know and understand oneself on many different levels and on learning to act on the basis of that self-knowledge.

## Self-identity

In exploring this strand unit, children are encouraged to see themselves as unique individuals, with differing abilities, strengths and limitations, who are loved and cared for and who have an important contribution to make in life. As the children progress through the school, more emphasis is placed on helping them to deal with the various factors that influence their self-esteem and self-concept, such as the role of peers, the role of families, personal successes and failures, media images, and the affirmation of others.

Increasing independence, self-reliance, resilience and self-efficacy are fostered in the curriculum through encouraging children to

- try new tasks and new situations
- take increasing responsibility for their own actions and behaviour
- learn to cope and deal with the many challenges that life can present
- reflect on their own reactions and behaviour in differing situations

- voice their own opinions and contribute to group and class decisions.

Teachers can help children to become more responsible for their own learning and to engage in self-assessment by enabling them

- to set goals for themselves
- to reflect on their own progress and achievements
- to engage in dialogue with the teacher about their work and their particular interests or frustrations.

In developing a sense of self, children need to be given opportunities to develop their sense of awareness: of themselves, of the world around them, and of the interconnectedness of things. Encouraging children and giving them time to pause, to wonder, to reflect and to appreciate mystery will help them to become aware of their own spirituality and the integrated nature of mind, body and spirit.

SPHE can contribute to the child's spiritual development by enabling him/her to examine and explore concepts and ideas, to formulate questions, and to explore dilemmas that are age-appropriate and meaningful. Opportunities will arise in SPHE for children to experience a sense of awe and mystery, such as in learning about the process of birth and new life and the exploration of the cycle of growth and change. Other aspects will also enhance the child's spiritual

*Children learn to explore change and to examine different ways of dealing with various types of change.*

development. These include working together, learning about one's own feelings and those of others, developing a sense of empathy, and experiencing supportive and healthy relationships. Children will also become aware of how particular beliefs and values are important in their lives and how they influence the decisions and choices they make.

### Taking care of my body

Children who care for and respect themselves are more likely to treat their own bodies with dignity and be more particular about their life-style choices, both now and in the future.

This strand unit focuses on promoting health by exploring

- the need for regular exercise
- food and nutrition and the significance of healthy eating habits
- the use and misuse of various substances
- the transmission of infection and disease.

As physical growth and development are explored, children learn the appropriate anatomical terms for the private parts of both the male and the female body. Acquiring this vocabulary at an early age provides the foundation for later learning on puberty and reproduction and can help children to speak about all parts of their bodies in a respectful and dignified way.

As children grow and develop they become increasingly aware of their own body image. It is important, particularly approaching puberty and in subsequent years, that children are encouraged to accept their own body image and to respect and care for their own bodies. In SPHE children are given the chance to explore some of the media images portrayed and to examine the influence of these body images on habits and behaviour.

### Growing and changing

Exploring the process of growth and change is essential for children. It will help them understand themselves and the various changes that they will experience as they grow towards adolescence. By exploring this strand unit children begin to understand that the rate at which each person grows is unique and that growth is characterised by a combination of social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and physical factors. Making children aware of this integrated nature of the human being can help them to grasp the fact that their emerging sexuality is an integral part of growth and development. In this context it is also essential that children have an understanding of puberty and human reproduction before they leave primary school. By becoming familiar with these changes the child can acquire the language and vocabulary necessary to discuss his/her own growth and development as well as being able to ask appropriate questions and clarify and find information that he/she might need.

*Opportunities are provided to name, express and deal with feelings.*

Because change is inevitable in life, children need to learn how to cope with it in a positive manner. At every class level children should be enabled to explore changes and situations that are relevant to them in their own lives and to examine appropriate ways of dealing with these changes. Loss, for example, is a change that children may experience in their lives. This strand unit explores losses of different kinds: the loss of a pet, a friend moving away, family separation or the death of a family member. It is envisaged that, having acquired strategies for dealing with such a change, children will be able to apply them in many other situations where change occurs.

### *Feelings and emotions*

Children need to learn to recognise and manage their own feelings. Opportunities are provided in this strand unit for them to name, express and deal with these feelings. The emphasis is placed on exploring the whole spectrum of feelings without labelling them as either positive or negative: for example, joy and excitement should be explored in a similar way to anger and envy. Understanding one's own feelings increases self-understanding and allows for greater awareness of one's own moods, intentions and motivations.

Children will begin to learn how to express feelings in an appropriate manner and to explore how it feels to be treated in an unjust or unfair manner. In the senior classes they learn positive ways of dealing with mood changes that may occur during puberty and learn that physical and hormonal changes affect the way they feel and act. Children increase their sense of personal control as they learn to recognise different feelings and explore ways in which these feelings affect themselves and others. Throughout the curriculum children are given opportunities to differentiate between needs and wants and in so doing come to understand the concept of delayed gratification. Developing empathy is also fostered at all levels in the school, as it is essential for handling and managing relationships, promoting compassion and sensitivity, and appreciating diversity.

### **Safety and protection**

Every child needs to know what to do when he/she is at risk. In this strand unit, children are made aware of potentially dangerous situations and are given the opportunity to explore strategies that can be used to help protect themselves and others. Among the topics included for exploration are:

- knowing when and how to seek help
- tasting or coming in contact with unknown substances
- getting lost

- the need for rules and regulations
- taking lifts from strangers
- being asked to keep a difficult secret.

Through SPHE children explore the concept of risk. It is important that they develop a balanced perspective on risk-taking by assessing situations and examining consequences. They also need to know when to seek advice and how to communicate their concerns in an appropriate manner.

Through exploring safety and protection, children are encouraged to

- identify when they need help and whom to approach in various situations
- develop an increasing sense of personal responsibility for their own safety and that of others
- explore issues concerning health and safety, including accident prevention and what can be done if an accident occurs
- focus on the use and misuse of various substances, both legal and illegal
- learn the importance of not intimidating, isolating, frightening, teasing or taunting others.

The curriculum also explores children's rights and particularly the right they have to feel safe. They need to be encouraged to recognise a potentially serious situation and to know how to take appropriate action.

## Making decisions

Being able to make informed decisions and choices is inherent in SPHE. Throughout the curriculum, decision-making skills are fostered and practised. Children can identify and recognise the kinds of decisions they can and cannot make and the factors that may influence their choices. They will learn how to

- exercise judgement
- weigh up different possibilities
- examine the steps and choices that guide them towards considered decision-making
- begin to understand their own rights and the rights of others, and associated responsibilities
- explore the various factors that influence decision-making
- reflect on actions taken.

In so doing they will see the consequences of alternative choices and learn to apply these insights to issues such as friendships, smoking, alcohol use and risk-taking. The skills in this area therefore will be developed through the experiences and situations that occur in a variety of contexts. It is hoped that by the time they leave primary school, children will have acquired an age-appropriate strategy for decision-making and will understand their own role and that of others in the process.

## Strand: Myself and others

### Strand units

- Myself and my family
- My friends and other people
- Relating to others

## Myself and others

Learning to care for and respect others is the cornerstone of this strand. It explores the role of various people in one's life and explores how people interact, communicate, live, play and work together.

### Myself and my family

This strand unit is concerned with the family and the experience of family as a community to which the child belongs. It is necessary to discuss families and different aspects of family life in an SPHE curriculum because of the significant role of the family in the child's life. However, the privacy of the child, the family and the teacher should be respected at all times.

Children can learn to value family life and appreciate their own families, beliefs and traditions through

- identifying what constitutes a family, emphasising the fact that family units and structures may not all be the same. These family structures include foster-families, one and two-parent families, situations where children are reared by people other than immediate family members, and children who have been adopted. It is also important to recognise the role of the extended family in the lives of many children.
- exploring the kinds of things that families can do together and how they care for, love and support each other

- identifying the different roles within families, understanding that these roles may vary and recognising that each individual makes a contribution to family life
- beginning to look at the behaviour that promotes harmony in families and becoming aware of the types of changes that could affect family life. These changes could include the birth of a new baby, moving house or school, separation, illness, violence or unemployment.
- examining the concept of belonging to a family and exploring how family life can alter as children move into adolescence and adulthood
- exploring the reality of the images of family life and life-styles presented in the media.

### My friends and other people

This strand unit begins with the child's experience of immediate friends and broadens out to include other people.

Opportunities are provided to explore

- the meaning and significance of friendship, what can threaten it, and how it can be supported
- aspects of genuine friendship, such as listening, trust, honesty, laughter, empathy and the importance of spending time together
- making and changing friends as part of growing up

- the ways in which individual actions and behaviour affect others
- treating others with dignity and respect.

In the senior classes the programme facilitates the exploration of both same-sex and boy-girl friendships. In these, as in all types of relationships, children are encouraged to be respectful towards each other and to be responsible in their behaviour. This complements the work being carried out on sexuality and growth and development in other sections of the programme.

Emphasis is also placed on examining the positive and negative role of peers and on helping children to cope with pressure and persuasive influences.

In exploring gender equity children are given the opportunity to reflect on their own attitudes and values and to discover ways of counteracting stereotypical images.

## Relating to others

This strand unit focuses on the development of a range of communication and interpersonal skills. In all classes children are encouraged to

- listen effectively
- talk, discuss, question and practise various non-verbal forms of communication
- learn about different types of communication and explore their effectiveness and appropriate use
- give and receive compliments, affirmation and constructive criticism
- empathise with others and explore issues from a variety of perspectives.



Children talking, playing and learning together

### Resolving conflict through

- identifying the problem
- exploring different techniques
- choosing the most appropriate approach
- learning how to compromise, to apologise, to receive apologies, and to forgive
- learning about passive, assertive and aggressive behaviour
- exploring bullying

### *Resolving conflict*

Healthy relationships by their very nature involve fun, sharing, laughter, intimacy, trust and honesty. However, conflict and disharmony are equally part of relationships. In SPHE children learn how to deal with conflict by practising different techniques that focus on identifying the problem and exploring possible solutions: for example, they can learn how to compromise, to apologise, to receive an apology and to forgive. In this context children become familiar with passive, aggressive and assertive behaviour and learn how each of these behaviour types is recognised and manifested.

Allied with the work on resolving conflict is the issue of bullying. Children can come to an understanding of what bullying is, the type of behaviour that constitutes bullying, and the role of various people in bullying situations. They learn that bullying is always wrong, and this is reinforced throughout their time in school. They are taught that there are certain steps to take if they are being bullied or if they see someone else being bullied. As bullying undermines self-esteem, it is essential at all levels to emphasise the fact that the child who is being victimised is not at fault. The approach adopted to dealing with bullying in SPHE will be informed by the policy on bullying drawn up and agreed in the school.



Sharing ideas in pairs

## Myself and the wider world

### Strand units:

- Developing citizenship
- Media education

## Myself and the wider world

The third strand places the child in the context of the world in which he/she lives. It aims to develop a respect for cultural and human diversity in the world and an appreciation for the democratic way of life. The child is encouraged to become an active and responsible citizen who understands the interdependent nature of the world in which he/she lives.

The content will be complemented by the work carried out in social, environmental and scientific education (SESE) and is designed to provide the foundation for civic, social and political education (CSPE) in post-primary schools.

### Developing citizenship

This strand unit begins by focusing on the school or class as a community in microcosm. By experiencing community in such a practical way, children learn what belonging and participation really mean.

In a school that values caring and shared responsibility, children can learn to

- share and co-operate
- set realistic goals and targets for themselves and others
- develop leadership and administrative abilities
- celebrate difference

- be part of something that goes beyond personal interest and recognise that they can make a valuable contribution to society.

The concept of democracy becomes real and meaningful for children as they are given the opportunity to

- voice individual opinions
- undertake a variety of responsibilities
- reach group decisions by consensus
- listen to different points of view
- work both as an individual and as a member of a group
- be involved in school decision-making.

These experiences lay the foundation for active and interested participation in society. In this context children can become aware of various roles in the democratic process, including those of the Presidency, the Oireachtas and the Constitution.

In this strand unit children explore the diversity of the world in which they live. They are encouraged to learn about their own traditions and culture and are given opportunities to compare and contrast these with other ethnic or cultural groups in society. They explore and examine how discrimination can occur in school, in the local community and in their own country. They learn about individual and group rights and responsibilities, particularly in the context of their school and local

*Children should be given the opportunity to become aware of the power of language.*

community, and to value and treat people as individuals. They are particularly encouraged to reflect on their own behaviour and to acknowledge where they themselves might be prejudiced and manifesting discrimination, and how this could be counteracted.

Words can be used to establish particular beliefs or values and to foster inaccuracies or misinformation about different groups or individuals. In challenging name-calling and labelling, children practise using language in a positive manner and begin to recognise ways in which words may contribute to injustice, prejudice and discrimination.

#### *Local, national and wider communities*

Exploring aspects of local, national, European and wider communities can help children develop a sense of the interdependent nature of the world. By appreciating this diversity they are encouraged to develop a critical awareness of their own identity in the widest sense.

#### *Environmental care*

A good citizen has a sense of individual and community responsibility in caring for the environment. This is developed and explored in SPHE and is complemented by the other aspects of environmental care and awareness that are dealt with in SESE: geography and science.

## Media education

The media, in all forms, influence our actions and our behaviour and can unconsciously affect the decisions that we make. In many instances they can contradict the values and attitudes that are taught in the home and at school. This can be confusing for children who are beginning to apply their own values to guide and inform their thoughts and actions.

Media education encourages children to examine the media in a critical way and to explore how they can influence behaviour and opinion.

In SPHE children are given the opportunity to

- become familiar with different media
- explore how prejudice and partiality can distort information
- explore some of the techniques used in the media
- examine how these techniques are used in promoting particular ideas or in selling particular products
- look at the media in a critical way by asking questions, exploring perspectives, and examining bias
- begin to investigate advertising and marketing strategies and practise using some of these approaches for themselves
- become discerning about the messages they receive from different media sources

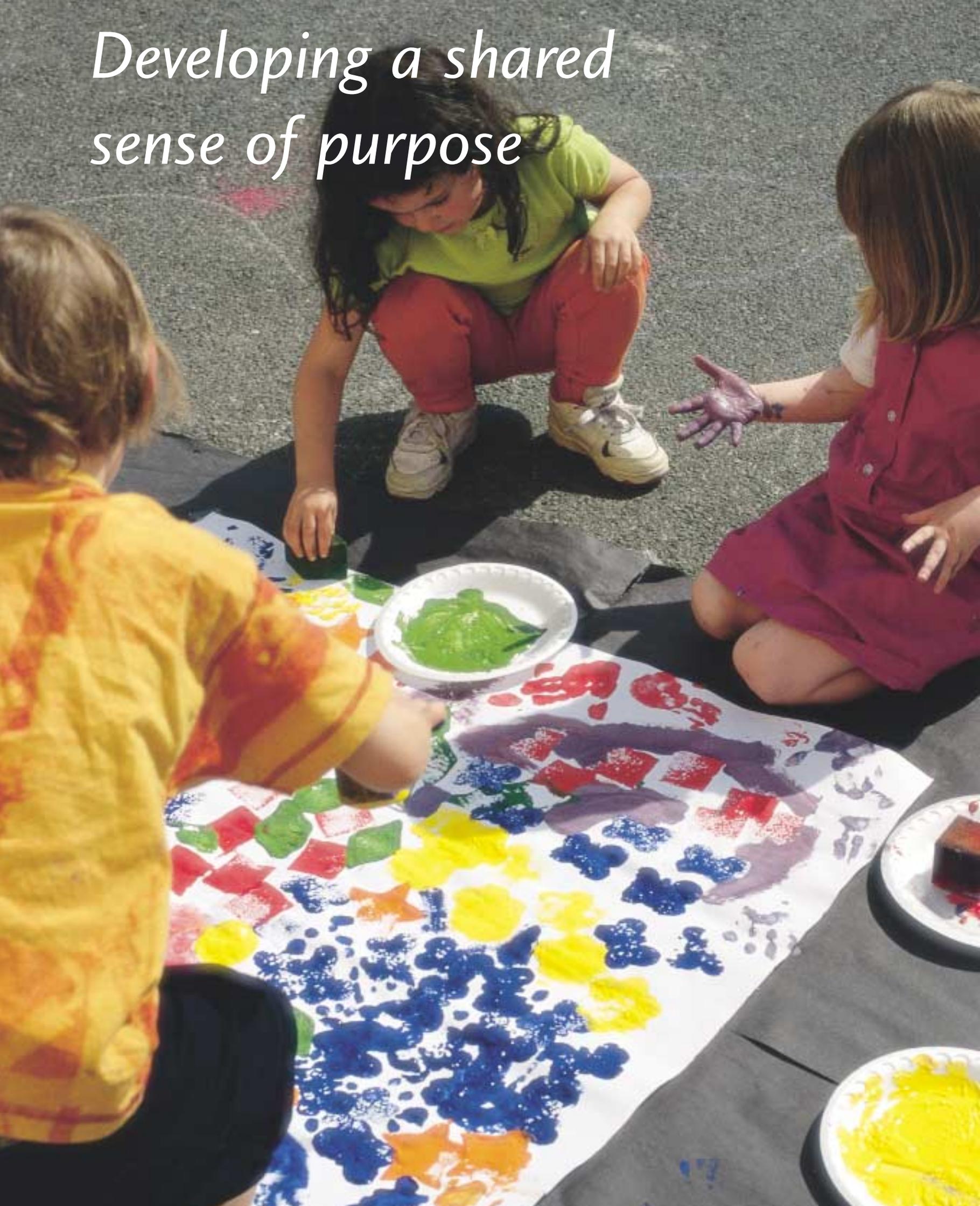
- examine how families and relationships are portrayed in the media, how conflicts are resolved, and how intimacy and sexuality are represented
- examine the effects of advertising on various aspects of life, for example on purchasing, dietary habits, health behaviour and life-style.

Children are also given opportunities to explore the range of information available to them through information and communication technologies. They can begin to become aware of cultural bias and the dominant perspective that pervades some of these technologies. They are encouraged to make the technology work for them and to become discerning and judicious media users .



Children using computers to source relevant information

*Developing a shared  
sense of purpose*



# School planning for SPHE

# School planning for SPHE

In planning SPHE it will be essential to identify approaches to

- creating a positive school climate and atmosphere
- the organisational planning of SPHE
- planning SPHE in the curriculum through discrete time and integration.

## Creating a positive school climate and atmosphere

A positive school climate and atmosphere is one where individuals are valued, cared for and respected. Such an atmosphere contributes to effective teaching and learning and to genuine communication, both within and outside the school.

Every school has its own culture and distinct ways of operating, which inform the organisation of the school, the relationships in the school, and the priority given to the welfare of the individual. Any planning for SPHE that takes place must take cognisance of this context for learning and teaching. It will require building on the good practice that already exists and reflecting on the ways in which the school can promote the all-round development of its young people.

Appropriate strategies for creating a positive climate and atmosphere include

- building effective communication within the school
- catering for individual needs
- creating a health-promoting physical environment
- developing democratic processes
- enhancing self-esteem
- fostering respect for diversity
- fostering inclusive and respectful language
- developing appropriate communication between home and school
- developing a school approach to assessment.

To create a positive school climate it will be necessary for each school to begin by asking fundamental questions regarding the 'way things are done around here'. These questions will help to focus on the values and principles upheld in the school and the ways in which they are put into practice.

## Fostering communication within and outside the school

Children and teachers feel valued and respected when they are listened to and when their individual concerns and opinions count. Each school will have to reflect on its own communication strategies to ensure that genuine communication is fostered at all levels.

### Some questions that could be addressed are:

- 1 How do children voice their concerns?
- 2 Are they listened to?
- 3 What forms of staff communication are in place?
- 4 How are parents made welcome and listened to in the school?
- 5 How are visitors invited and welcomed?

## Catering for the individual needs of the children

Children come from a variety of backgrounds, beliefs and understanding and can be at many different stages of their personal, social and health development. These factors influence the approaches taken to SPHE in the school. The curriculum will need to be adapted to suit various needs, interests and concerns and to deal with the specific environment in which the school is placed.

## Creating a health-promoting physical environment

It is essential that the physical environment of the school promotes the general health and well-being of both the children and the teachers. It should be one where

- the basic physical needs, such as heat, light and adequate ventilation, are met
- appropriate facilities are provided for eating and playing
- the building and its environs are safe, promote a sense of security, and create an atmosphere that fosters living in a healthy way.

Pleasant surroundings encourage children to take pride in their own school and can provide a welcome for those who are visiting. Children can also learn how to care for and respect the wider environment as they share the responsibility for taking care of their own immediate physical surroundings.

*Self-esteem can be defined as the degree to which people feel worthy, capable, significant and effective.*

## Developing democratic processes

A school should reflect a caring community where the welfare of each individual is fostered and the concerns of all are taken into account. Children experience and practise the democratic process where

- rules are negotiated
- responsibility is shared
- the opinions of parents, children and teachers are valued
- they feel a sense of belonging
- a sense of commitment to a common purpose is developed and understood.

The holding of a regular school assembly gives children an experience of community and can increase their sense of belonging. Other strategies to foster democracy include taking part in events on behalf of the school and celebrating individual, class or school achievements. In many situations a structure can be created where children are involved in the decision-making in the school and are given responsibilities both as individuals and as groups.

## Enhancing the self-esteem and well-being of members of the school community

Without a positive sense of self-worth, the well-being of either the individual or the community is unlikely to flourish. Self-esteem can be defined as the degree to which people feel worthy, capable, significant and effective. It is essential that the school plans for a consistent approach to enhancing the self-concept and self-esteem of all its community by including opportunities to foster

- a sense of identity
- a sense of purpose
- a sense of belonging
- a sense of security
- a sense of competence.

Strategies for fostering positive self-esteem include:

- creating structures and approaches within the school that reflect interest in all the children
- providing opportunities for each child to succeed, to develop individual talents and to acquire a realistic picture of his/her own strengths and limitations
- encouraging and affirming each individual
- ensuring that the school expectations of children are positive and realistic

- providing time for individual discussions on progress and exploring ways in which the child can enhance his/her own learning
- providing a welcome for new entrants and their parents to the school
- creating a structure within which children feel secure and have support when upset
- affirming the work of members of the staff and providing whole-school in-career development
- celebrating achievements.



The school is an intercultural community.

## Fostering respect for human and cultural diversity

The relationships that children witness in school can have a profound effect on their social development. Where children are treated in a fair and just way and experience respect for diversity there is a greater chance that they will treat others in the same way. The school has a responsibility to ensure that its curriculum is free of bias and that issues of inequality in any form are addressed and dealt with.

Schools have a particular opportunity to promote genuine respect for diversity by ensuring that

- groups are regularly changed and do not always consist of the same children
- teams are not always chosen by individual children
- books used are bias-free and gender equity is promoted at all levels
- the strengths of individual children are fostered
- children are encouraged to listen to different points of view.

In learning about the cultures of others and exploring various traditions and practices the children can develop a sense of respect for difference and appreciate the contribution that such difference has to offer. This exploration will be particularly relevant where there is a diversity of cultures within a class. It will help to encourage children to be inclusive in their dealings with others, to challenge prejudice, and to learn how to live in an intercultural society.

## Fostering inclusive and respectful language

Language reflects values, attitudes, beliefs, prejudices and principles. It not only helps to express a culture but influences and shapes that culture as well. It is essential that children are enabled to use language in a precise and appropriate manner.

The language that is promoted in the school must be one that nurtures both children and adults as unique and valuable human beings. It should respect cultural and other differences between people and be used in a way that encourages inclusiveness. Language can significantly contribute to building positive self-esteem, whereas if used in a negative manner it can cause frustration and hurt.

These messages about language will be communicated to children in the school primarily by the manner in which language is used. The way in which children are addressed in class, the manner in which they are reproached or affirmed and the tone of voice used in exploring issues of a personal nature will all reflect the values that are upheld in the school.

Being aware of how children treat each other when playing together will be helpful in choosing issues for exploration in the class. Contesting some of the crude and incorrect associations with particular words and phrases will enable children to counteract them in their own talk,

actions and behaviour. School policies should ensure that language is used in a positive and affirming way and not to belittle, intimidate or insult others.

## Developing appropriate communication between home and school

The school needs to develop effective strategies for dialogue between teachers and parents. It will be essential to SPHE that parents and teachers find ways of listening to each other and of taking the opinions and concerns of both home and school into account. Examples of strategies that could be considered are:

- creating structures for individual consultation with parents and with members of the community
- arranging meetings at appropriate times
- creating a balance between class meetings (for example to introduce the curriculum and/or classroom strategies) and larger group meetings
- ensuring clarity of language in any form of written communication from the school.

## Developing a school approach to assessment

Assessment is as essential to SPHE as it is to any other subject. In the development of a school plan there should be agreement on the role of assessment in SPHE, the tools to be used in assessing children, and the ways in which the child's progress can be communicated to the child, to parents and to other teachers.

The assessment process should be a positive experience for children and enable the teacher to

- modify curriculum content according to the needs of the child and so maximise the learning potential of each individual
- adapt learning and teaching strategies used in the classroom to ensure that they are appropriate to the objectives of the curriculum and the ways in which children learn
- assess the effectiveness of learning through the school climate and atmosphere, in the discrete time and throughout other subjects
- discover what the child knows, understands and can do
- promote self-assessment in the child, where he/she learns the value of monitoring his/her own progress and develops some responsibility for his/her own learning. The child is helped to set realistic goals and targets and to become aware of his/her own strengths and difficulties.

- explore how the child transfers learning from one situation to another
- communicate with the child, parents and others regarding the child's abilities, strengths and overall progress in SPHE.

Many of the benefits of SPHE do not emerge or are not evident until long after the child has left primary school. Assessment in SPHE refers to the aspects of the programme that can be realistically assessed during the child's time in school.

Assessment includes teacher-child discussion about progress, difficulties and strengths. Expressing and showing a genuine interest in the child's work in this way contributes significantly to the pupil-teacher relationship. It also adds to the child's sense of security, because he/she knows how he/she is progressing and that efforts are being acknowledged. It is essential to encourage children to develop the skills of effective self-assessment in order to help them to see what they value and how they value it and to set these judgements against external criteria.

It is essential to use a variety of techniques in assessing SPHE. They should take cognisance of the styles of learning and the range of intelligences that are evident in the classroom and genuinely reflect the children's progress. If children are assessed in this way, the teacher will be able to plan and adapt learning experiences according to

individual needs and ensure that the programme in SPHE is meaningful for all.

Among the tools that are recommended for SPHE are

- teacher observation
- teacher-designed tasks and tests
- portfolios.

Much of the assessment in SPHE will occur in everyday teaching and learning in the classroom and while children are at play. This will be an informal type of assessment that is non-intrusive and non-threatening to the child. On some occasions formal tests or tasks designed by the teacher will also be helpful in determining the child's progress in some of the content.

Information from formal behavioural tests, carried out in conjunction with psychologists and other professionals, may further contribute to the overall assessment of the child.

Where the assessment process is explored among the staff as a whole there will be a consistency and a continuity of approach for the children, the teachers and the parents. The communication of information regarding a child's progress can ensure that both home and school play a significant role in helping the child to learn.



Pair-work allows children to clarify their own ideas and opinions.

### Developing a plan for SPHE

- exploring the nature and essence of SPHE
- drawing up a school approach to SPHE
- engaging in an information and consultative process
- reviewing after a fixed period

## The organisational planning of SPHE

Introducing a structured approach to SPHE will present challenges to all involved. The central feature of organising SPHE is the development of an overall approach to the area in the context of the school plan. Because of the nature of SPHE it is essential that this is drawn up with appropriate consultation.

School policies such as those on bullying, RSE or substance misuse will inform the development of a school approach to SPHE. In turn, any review of such policies will have to take cognisance of the SPHE programme that is in place in the school.

### The stages in developing a school approach to SPHE

A school approach for SPHE should be realistic, reflect the needs of the children, and give a clear sense of purpose and direction to the teacher. It will identify the appropriate strategies for effectively implementing SPHE in the school and will result from consultation between parents, teachers, management and ancillary staff. There are a number of stages in this process:

- *exploring the nature and essence of SPHE.* The starting point for developing an overall approach to SPHE will be agreeing a common understanding of the subject area and its role and place in the school curriculum. It will be important to be aware of its multi-dimensional

character and the various ways in which it is implemented in the school. As part of this exploration, schools will identify the aspects of SPHE that are being covered in the existing curriculum or any programmes in use that comply with the underlying principles of the SPHE curriculum

- *drawing up a school approach to SPHE.* The second stage of the process will be the drawing up of an overall school approach to SPHE. This will enable each school to see where it is now and to plan for its future development
- *engaging in an information and consultative process.* In consulting parents, management and ancillary staff, options, views, attitudes and opinions will be explored. As a result of this consultative and reflective process an approach to SPHE in the context of the school plan will be agreed. Teachers will be guided by this agreement when implementing the SPHE programme in the school
- *reviewing after a fixed period.* It is essential that a review of the programme takes place after a fixed period. Teachers, parents and children will all have valuable insights to contribute to the review. This can be quite informal but provides time to examine how the work is proceeding, any difficulties that may be arising, the adequacy of resources and support, and the effectiveness of the plan.

## Various roles in organising SPHE

### *The role of the board of management*

It is the responsibility of the board of management to support and facilitate the school approach to SPHE as it is being developed and to approve and review this approach within the context of the overall school plan.

### *The role of parents*

Since parents have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children, the school should provide them with opportunities to contribute to the development and implementation of SPHE in the school. Opportunities for involvement include:

- participating in school planning and review
- supporting teachers in implementing particular aspects of the programme
- discussing the learning that has taken place in school with their children
- reviewing resources for specific aspects of the programme.

### *The role of the principal*

The principal has a central role in ensuring that the SPHE curriculum is effectively implemented in the school in accordance with the school plan.

He/she will need to encourage and enable staff to adopt and apply some of the new strategies and take a different perspective on what is happening in the class. In many instances the principal

will be the liaison person between the board of management and the staff, and between members of the community and the staff.

### *The role of the teacher*

Children are more likely to gain from a curriculum where there is consistency in the approach taken by all teachers in the school. Some teachers may have developed skills in the use of various approaches in SPHE or may have had previous experience of using materials in this area, while others may have a keen interest in health issues. Sharing this expertise and encouraging each other will be significant elements in the implementation of a comprehensive SPHE programme.

### *The role of ancillary and support staff*

The wider school community will have an important role to play in supporting the social, personal and health development of the children. In their interactions with both teachers and children they can reflect the principles promoted by the SPHE programme. It will be important that they are involved in the consultation process and are aware of the various policies that exist in the school.

## Planning SPHE through discrete time and integration

While the school climate and atmosphere is a key context for learning, SPHE also takes place through discrete time and an integrated approach across relevant subject areas. Some issues that need to be considered when planning for these approaches are:

- *choosing appropriate resources and materials for the school.* In order to implement some of the content of the curriculum the teacher will need appropriate resource materials and ideas for developing particular lessons. These can include books, posters, work cards, teacher handbooks, CD-ROMs, particular web sites, television and radio programme or videos.

### Questions to be considered when choosing resources

- 1 What range of materials are available to the school?
- 2 What criteria have we for choosing materials?
- 3 Will there be a consistent approach to the use of particular materials throughout the school?

- *identifying the ways in which different issues will be addressed in the school programme.* The SPHE curriculum is designed in such a way that individual issues such as

relationships and sexuality, substance misuse, bereavement, racism or child abuse prevention are not treated in isolation. It adopts a comprehensive approach to the social, personal and health development of the child, focusing on a framework of attitudes, values, skills and understanding that children need and that will inform them in a variety of situations.

It is important that schools recognise the place of social, personal and health issues in the context of this framework.

### Questions to be considered when identifying ways in which issues will be addressed in the school programme

- 1 What aspects of the curriculum are common to a variety of social, personal and health issues?
- 2 What resources will meet the specific needs of individual issues and topics?

- *exploring how the content can be implemented in the different classes.* Because the curriculum is presented at four levels it will be necessary to examine how a spiral approach can be planned in different types of schools. Every school will have to decide on the aspects of the SPHE curriculum to be covered at each

class level to ensure that a comprehensive programme is in place. In exploring sensitive issues in multi-grade classes it will be necessary to be *flexible* in drawing up a programme and to take into account the different levels of emotional and physical development of the children. In schools the implementation of SPHE may require some co-ordination. Where this is necessary schools are encouraged to explore various options and to create a structure according to their needs and available resources.

- *inviting speakers to the school.* On occasions it may be appropriate to invite speakers to visit the school.

### Questions to be considered when inviting speakers to the school

- 1 What topics may require an outside contribution?
- 2 Will a visitor be invited to speak to the whole school or to individual classes?
- 3 Is the visit in accordance with the school plan?
- 4 Will parents be made aware of, and invited to, some of the visiting presentations?
- 5 How many visits should take place during the school year?

- *implementing whole-school themes.* Themes such as safety, hygiene or environmental care could be selected by the school and implemented in all classes for a particular period. This is a particularly useful way of highlighting an aspect of the curriculum and ensuring a consistent approach throughout the school. Teachers will need to make decisions regarding the most appropriate themes to be explored in their individual school, and, where possible, children should be involved in making these decisions.
- *the amount of time to be devoted to SPHE.* In the overall planning, time should relate to the way in which the chosen objectives of the curriculum are being achieved rather than the number of hours spent. It may be more appropriate on occasions to use the discrete time in block periods rather than as a series of half-hour slots. This flexibility can be explored among the teachers and decisions made according to individual or school needs.

## Support and resources

- the local community
- special-focus programmes
- Regional Health Authorities
- the media

## Identifying support and resources for SPHE

Planning for the SPHE curriculum will involve identifying and enlisting the support of different groups or individuals in the community.

### *Support of members of the local community*

There are a number of people in the local community who can support the SPHE curriculum in very significant ways. A local garda, firefighter, crossing warden, nurse or doctor can visit the classroom, work with the teacher, and reinforce what has been taught. Other people who could be involved are a local forestry team, a vet, a presenter from local radio or members of local community groups.

### *Use of special-focus programmes*

Many programmes are available, both national and regional, that may be relevant and useful for SPHE. They deal with issues such as the prevention of substance misuse, celebrating difference, the prevention of child abuse, consumer education, and relationships and sexuality education. It is essential that any special focus programmes used in school, comply with the principles of the SPHE curriculum.

### *Regional Health Authorities*

Health Promotion Centres can support specific aspects of SPHE in the school through the provision of information, training and resources.

### *Use of various forms of media*

Recorded extracts from advertisements, programmes, videos and compact discs will be necessary to examine the influence of the media and the techniques they employ. In this context the daily newspaper, when it is explored with the children, can also be an invaluable resource in the classroom.

The availability of a range of information and communication technologies offers further possibilities for children to examine methods of communication and information retrieval. Support services for this area, including lists of educational web sites and ideas for using the internet and word-processing programs in the classroom, are all available to schools and can guide and help the teacher in using these technologies to support SPHE. Equally, many computer simulation and adventure programs can provide an interesting medium for exploring some aspects of the SPHE curriculum.

## Choosing resources

The school can draw up a set of criteria for choosing resources so that those that are used cater appropriately for the aims and objectives of the curriculum and reflect the school policies and school ethos. A sample of criteria for choosing various resources is given in the Appendix. This can be adapted according to individual school needs.

*Reflecting on  
learning together*



## Section 4

# Classroom planning for SPHE

# Classroom planning for SPHE

A positive classroom climate and atmosphere can be created through providing

- a pleasant teaching and learning environment that feels spacious and is visually stimulating
- a variety of ways for children to work and interact positively together
- appropriate strategies for resolving conflict and rewarding children
- opportunities to negotiate class rules and to involve children in decision-making
- reflection at the end of the school day or week
- experiences that heighten self-confidence and self-esteem
- opportunities to set goals for the day or week
- *quiet time.*

This section deals with the planning of the teacher's work in the classroom. It includes

- planning issues for the teacher
- an approach to planning the work.

## Planning issues for the teacher

There are many issues to be taken into account when planning SPHE in the classroom. A plan of work for the classroom derives from the overall school plan and must reflect school policy on all matters related to the social, personal and health education of the children.

## Creating a positive climate and atmosphere in the classroom

There is a direct correlation between the quality of the learning environment and the quality of the learning that takes place within it. A positive classroom climate and atmosphere, where children feel respected, valued and cared for, is essential for the effective implementation of an SPHE programme. Any learning that occurs will need to be reflected in the everyday interactions in the class and in the ways in which the children and the teacher work and relate together.

In a pleasant and secure working environment, children can explore issues and topics knowing that their opinions and ideas will be taken seriously. The ways in which they are grouped or are given responsibilities will contribute to their learning and their developing sense of self. Similarly, the manner in which conflicts are resolved, decisions are made and children are rewarded will reflect the democratic process and ensure that children experience in their everyday lives what is being taught and advocated in the formal teaching time. The way in which teachers and children communicate with each other, how time is managed and activities balanced will support the programme and help to make SPHE real and meaningful.

Routine activities such as the exchange of greetings every morning help children to feel welcome and secure and to experience a real sense of belonging. Engaging children in informal conversations can contribute to their social, personal and health education and provide appropriate opportunities to teach vocabulary, particularly that of a sensitive nature. Changing the classroom furniture around where possible or moving the children to sit with different people helps them to cope with change and fosters their social skills.

At the start of the school day or school week it can be useful to allow children time to set goals for themselves. For example, they could identify three things that they would like to learn or to achieve in the coming week. The children could then learn to represent these goals in different ways and to chart and record their progress.

Providing opportunities to reflect together on the day's work in class can also be very effective in fostering a positive classroom climate. This type of review is one where successes can be shared, failures put into perspective, and new directions planned. Children can be helped to see where they have made some progress, to recognise small gestures of friendship or ways in which they showed independence. Reflection at the end of the day allows children to see all the roles they played in one day, how they worked in class, and what they have learned.

Through a *Quiet time* teachers can create a space in the schedule for fifteen minutes once a week or a fortnight for each child to work quietly on his/her own. The activities used during this time can include drawing, reading, making a picture or writing a story, listening to a tape or using a computer. This time can also be used for personal reflection, either on some event that happened and its possible outcomes or on some work that was carried out during the day. The children do not have to share these thoughts in the class

but are encouraged to think for themselves and reflect on their own behaviour, actions and attitudes. The teacher can sometimes prompt the children to help them in their deliberations.

*Quiet time* also provides opportunities for children to be still and to find some space for themselves in the centre of their everyday living. The development of such a skill will be significant for children in their later lives and will help them to realise the importance of a balanced life-style.

### Planning for discrete time and integration

Many aspects of SPHE can be dealt with in a cross-curricular manner, while other aspects will benefit from the discrete time available on the timetable. In planning it will be crucial for the teacher to decide how these two approaches can be used effectively to implement the curriculum. He/she will need to identify aspects of the programme that could be integrated in a meaningful way with work in other areas, decide on how such aspects could be treated, and arrange the timetable in such a way as to accommodate any integrated learning and teaching.

Similarly, the teacher will need to identify the aspects of the programme that will require discrete time and find the resources and materials needed to meet these needs. In planning for both approaches the teacher will have to

ensure that

- the SPHE programme is comprehensively covered for all children
- the integrity of individual subjects is not compromised
- the discrete time is used as effectively as possible
- integration is meaningful.

#### *Possibilities for integration*

Integration can take place in various ways: teachers can adopt a thematic approach, where a theme is explored from a number of different perspectives, or integration can be subject-based, where for example an SPHE issue is the main focus of the exploration and skills or information from another subject are used to enhance the learning.

Integrating learning processes is also an effective way of implementing SPHE across the curriculum, where, for example strategies to foster self-confidence, independence, positive attitudes or critical reflection are used in a variety of subjects.

Some of the opportunities to integrate SPHE throughout the curriculum are identified below:

- *language*: using language precisely; acquiring appropriate vocabulary; developing communication skills; learning how to question, to predict, to be critical and to analyse; developing one's imagination and exploring emotions and feelings

through the spoken and written word; examining the print media

- *history*: developing empathy; exploring changing influences on our lives; learning about the factors that shape the community; exploring the various contributions of different groups to society; exploring myself and my family
- *science*: exploring: the way the body works, the constituents of different foods, the process of physical growth and development; learning to care for the environment
- *geography*: developing a sense of place; exploring local and national issues; developing an appreciation of different national, religious and cultural groups; learning to care for the environment
- *mathematics*: interpreting and representing data; measuring and estimating; comparing and recording; solving problems
- *visual arts*: creating and exploring images and pictures; expressing ideas, feelings and experiences in visual form; looking at and enjoying images in the environment
- *physical education*: choosing teams and playing games in a fair manner; understanding physical exercise as necessary for overall health and well-being; developing individual skills and talents; developing self-esteem and self-confidence; providing opportunities for co-operation and

interaction; appreciating the importance of safety and learning how to act safely

- *music*: using music to explore moods and feelings; understanding the role of music in our heritage; exploring music as a form of universal communication; developing self-expression and a sense of well-being through music; making decisions; taking individual and group responsibility through composing
- *drama*: using drama: to recognise and manage feelings, to learn to trust and respect others in a group, to experience open and healthy relationships, to foster respect for differences in people, and to help the child understand and moderate his/her temperament.

*Other factors in planning SPHE in the classroom include*

- *the experience of the class so far*. The work carried out in previous classes will have to be considered when drawing up a class programme
- *the need to respond to changing social and environmental needs*. The choice of topics will be influenced by the needs of the children; and where there is selection within strands, teachers can choose on the basis of current social and environmental needs
- *a spiral approach to the programme*. It will be essential to revisit the content in a planned and consistent

manner to ensure that children explore issues appropriate to their age and stage of development

- *individual difference*. In any one class there will be a broad range of abilities, interest levels and stages of maturity. The depth of exploration in the programme will have to take this diversity into account
- *finding a balance*. In any programme that is developed for the class it will be essential that a balance is achieved between skill development, the fostering of values and attitudes, and the acquisition of information
- *the need to use a variety of approaches and methodologies*. The use of a variety of active learning approaches will be essential to an effective SPHE programme. These are outlined in detail on p. 58–99.
- *incidents and events that may arise in the classroom*. Many happenings and events that occur incidentally can provide opportunities for learning. Flexibility is required if issues of importance to the children are to be explored and given the time and attention they may need.

## An approach to planning the work

The curriculum in SPHE comprises three strands, *Myself*, *Myself and others* and *Myself and the wider world*, which are subdivided into a number of strand units.

These strand units consist of a topic or a number of topics that are related to the unit. The objectives and the exemplars in each strand unit indicate the outcomes to be achieved for the four levels in the primary school.

It is envisaged that aspects of all three major strands will be covered in any one year. The teacher should choose topics

or strand units from within the strands in such a way that the child will receive a comprehensive programme in SPHE over a two-year period. Any aspects of the curriculum not covered in a particular year should be included when the teacher is organising the class plan for the following year.

The pages for planning and selecting content in the SPHE curriculum will guide the teacher in choosing the strand units and the range of objectives for each class level. Using this information, he/she will decide on the length of time it will take to adequately cover a strand unit and will develop the timetable accordingly.

### Junior infants to second class

#### Myself

Self-identity  
Taking care of my body  
Growing and changing  
Safety and protection

#### Myself and others

Myself and my family  
My friends and other people  
Relating to others

#### Myself and the wider world

Developing citizenship  
Media education

### Third class to sixth class

#### Myself

Self-identity  
Taking care of my body  
Growing and changing  
Safety and protection  
Making decisions

#### Myself and others

Myself and my family  
My friends and other people  
Relating to others

#### Myself and the wider world

Developing citizenship  
Media education

Having chosen the content to be covered in a particular year, the teacher will decide how this can be implemented in the three contexts for learning, that is, the objectives that will be achieved in the discrete time, in the context of other subject areas, or in a combination of both, and how these objectives will be reinforced and developed in the context of the classroom or school climate and atmosphere.

### Exemplars

Each of the five exemplars on the following pages

- present content from a strand unit as outlined in the curriculum, identifying strategies for creating a supportive classroom environment and some appropriate teaching approaches and tools for assessment
- illustrate how this strand unit or a topic within the strand unit can be explored during SPHE discrete time and across other subjects.

#### *Exemplar 1*

Strand unit: Taking care of my body  
Topic within strand unit: Food and nutrition

#### *Exemplar 2*

Strand unit: My friends and other people  
Strand unit or topic: My friends and other people

#### *Exemplar 3*

Strand unit: Media education  
Strand unit or topic: Media education

#### *Exemplar 4*

Strand unit: Developing citizenship  
Topic within strand unit: The local community

#### *Exemplar 5*

Strand unit: Developing citizenship  
Topic within strand unit: National, European and wider communities

These exemplars are provided for illustrative purposes only and are not prescriptive. They will help the teacher in planning further topics in any of the strand units.

# Exemplar 1

Strand unit: Taking care of my body

infant classes

## Food and nutrition

The child should be enabled to

- become aware of the importance of food for growth and development
- explore food preferences and their role in a balanced diet
- discuss and explore some qualities and categories of food
- realise the importance of good hygiene when preparing food to eat.

## Classroom climate and atmosphere

A school or classroom climate that supports this unit is one that

- has a health-promoting environment
- has a code of hygiene
- has the availability of hot water and adequate hygiene facilities
- has appropriate means of disposing of litter
- has a PE programme available to all
- provides opportunities for relaxation and quiet time.

## Teaching approaches

Methods that may be used are:

- using structured play activities to
  - practise basic hygiene skills*
  - play out eating meals and using cutlery*
  - practise appropriate manners and preparing a meal*
- stories and pictures
  - to provide for discussion on how to keep the body healthy and well*
- simple experiments
  - to taste and smell different food products, to explore the effects of heating and cooling*
  - textures of foods*
- presenting work in pictures or collage and writing based on findings.

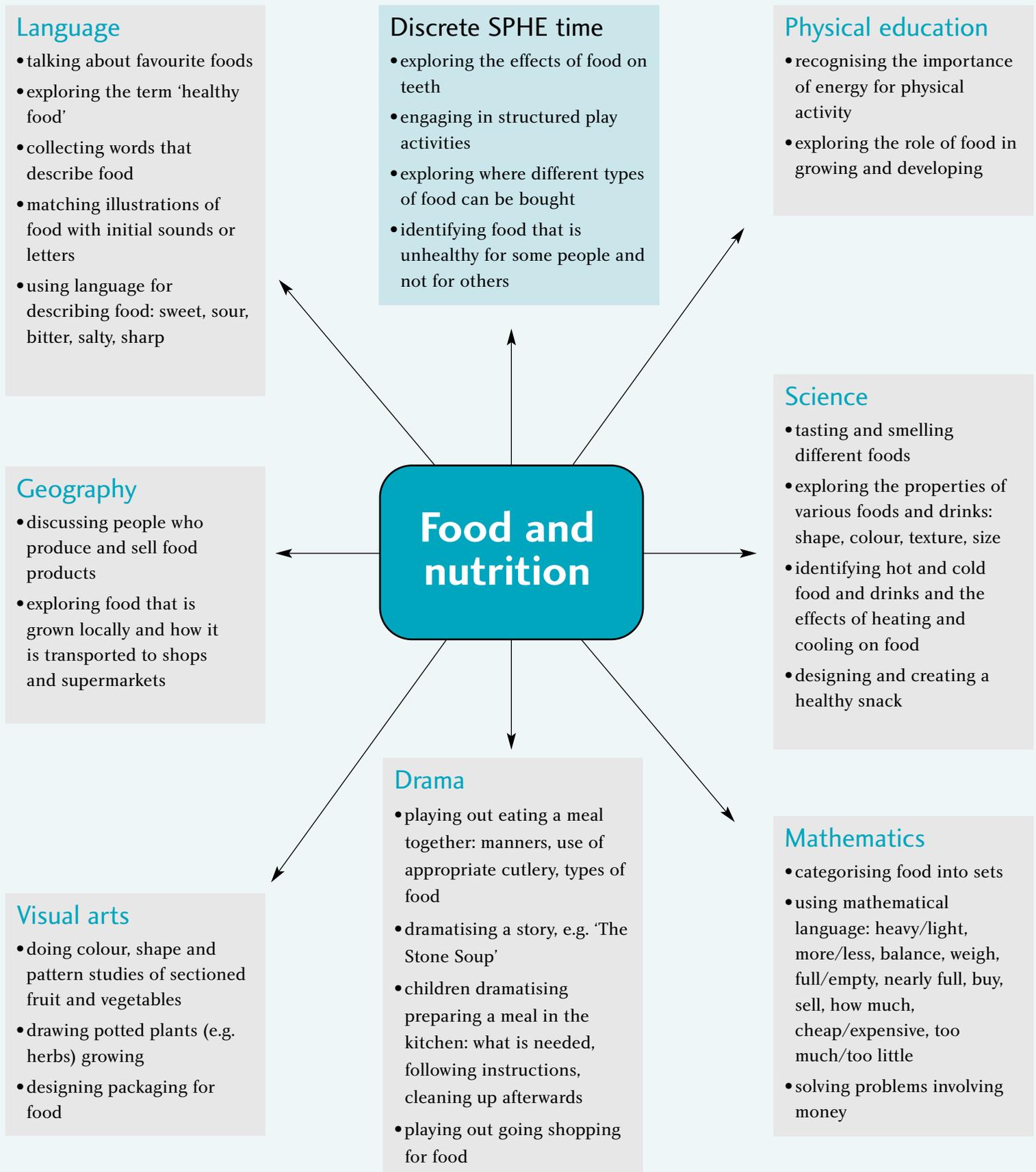
## Assessment

Techniques that may be used are:

- teacher observation
  - the language children use,*
  - outcomes of discussions between the children and between the teacher and the children*
- teacher-designed tasks
  - categorising food according to colour, qualities, preferences, as healthy or unhealthy*
  - practising correct ways of brushing teeth*
  - matching foods to their initial sounds*
- portfolio assessment
  - illustrations of favourite foods or pictures created using foods,*
  - illustrations of healthy and unhealthy foods, suggestions for keeping the body healthy, designing a healthy snack.*

# Topic: Food and nutrition

infant classes



# Exemplar 2

Strand unit: My friends and other people

first and second classes

## My friends and other people

The child should be enabled to

- discuss personal friends and why he/she enjoys being with them
- identify, explore and discuss qualities and skills associated with friendship
- explore how friends can influence personal actions and decisions
- know how to treat people with dignity and respect
- recognise and explore bullying behaviour, who is involved, and its effects on different people.
- know that bullying is always wrong and what should be done if one is being bullied or sees it happening to someone else.

## Classroom climate and atmosphere

A school or classroom climate that supports this unit is one

- that has opportunities for children to be listened to and to talk and listen to others
- where there is positive communication at all levels
- that has a school policy on bullying
- where the principle of mutual respect and appreciating difference is practised
- where activities and behaviour in the school yard are grounded in equity and fairness
- where there are opportunities for working together in small groups or in pairs
- where relevant issues are explored as they arise in the class, such as in conflict or bullying situations.

## Teaching approaches

Methods that may be used are:

- drama activities, exploring how to deal with conflict and the options available
- exploring pictures and photographs  
*exploring difference*
- open-ended sentences
- circle work
- stories and poetry  
*exploring friendship and the qualities of friendship*
- co-operative games
- listening activities
- role-playing  
*practising courtesy and good manners when dealing with others.*

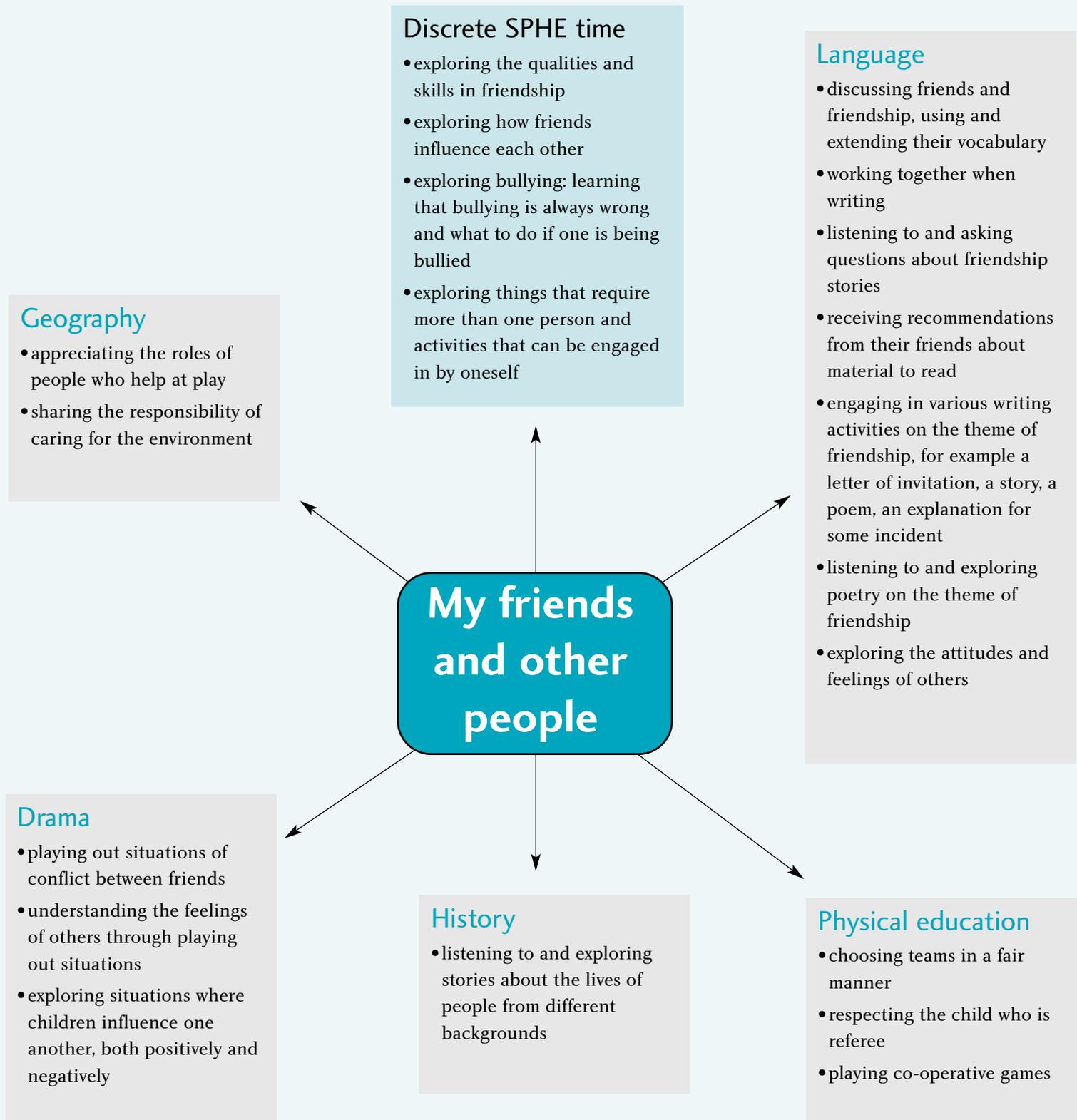
## Assessment

Techniques that may be used are:

- teacher observation  
*informal observation of the children interacting with one another; the way they share and work as a group; the outcomes of various discussions; the way children communicate with each other and with the teacher*
- teacher-designed tasks and tests  
*identifying friends and qualities of friendship.*

# Topic: My friends and other people

first and second classes



# Exemplar 3

Strand unit: Media education

third and fourth classes

## Media education

The child should be enabled to

- explore the different ways in which information can be transmitted and learn to be discerning and selective about this information, with particular regard to language, behaviour, authenticity and attitudes
- discuss and explore television, radio, videos, computer games, the internet (worldwide web and e-mail) and other media
- become aware of advertising and its purpose and nature
- begin to explore some of the techniques that are used in marketing and advertising
- explore and examine some issues that are frequently raised in the media, the way they are portrayed and the accuracy of these presentations.

## Classroom climate and atmosphere

A school or classroom climate that supports this unit is one that

- has a class library
- has captioned drawings and posters around the classroom
- has a display area
- promotes discussion by children of daily happenings and events in the news
- has a range of information and communication technologies available to the children
- encourages children to explore their own interests.

## Teaching approaches

Methods that may be used are:

- analysing pictures and photographs
- using recorded extracts from television, radio, and videos
- analysing headlines and captions
- creating and designing advertisements using different techniques
- exploring stories and extracts from newspapers and literature
- interviewing, reporting, recording, and summarising
- making posters
- creating and carrying out surveys.

## Assessment

Techniques that may be used are:

- teacher observation
  - observing the critical skills that the children use;*
  - observing how they approach the media and are discerning about their choices*
- teacher-designed tasks and tests
  - presenting children with a range of options*
  - presenting children with data that must be recorded*
  - interpreting data*
  - carrying out surveys*
  - creating advertisements.*

# Topic: Media

third and fourth classes

## Discrete SPHE time

- exploring aspects of life that are played out in the media
- considering some of the issues and topics that are raised in popular dramas, films, newspapers, and radio programmes
- exploring and learning how to use the internet, e-mail, and other forms of electronic media
- questioning and analysing pictures and photographs
- discussing the use and effect of music, sound effects and non-verbal cues in audio tapes, videos and film clips
- exploring advertisements and advertising techniques
- designing and presenting advertisements in different forms

## Drama

- creating his/her own radio or television programme
- exploring some of the characters that are familiar to the children from television and literature
- interviewing and recording other children in character
- creating and playing out advertisements

## Language

- creating and exploring captions
- comparing and contrasting headlines
- summarising and prioritising ideas
- engaging in and talking about books: favourite characters or authors, plot, motives
- distinguishing between fact and fiction in various media
- exploring some of the language used in advertising

## Media

## History

- comparing and contrasting the role of media today and in our grandparents' time
- looking at old photographs, books and newspapers
- using media techniques to present findings in history

## Music

- listening to signature tunes and the lyrics and beat of favourite pieces of music
- exploring how music is used to create mood and atmosphere

## Mathematics

- classifying television programmes into different categories using pictograms, bar charts or block graphs
- recording and interpreting data relating to hours spent watching television, playing video games, using computers or listening to the radio

# Exemplar 4

Strand unit: Developing citizenship

fifth and sixth classes

## Living in the local community

The child should be enabled to

- explore the concept of the class or school as a community
- practise ways of working together and of developing a sense of belonging
- explore some local traditions and folklore and develop a sense of pride in his/her own community
- recognise and understand the role of the individual and various groups in the community
- recognise and explore the positive contributions made to the local community by various organisations, ethnic, social or community groups and individuals
- explore how inequality might exist in the local community and suggest ways in which this might be addressed
- identify some local issues of concern and explore possible action that could be taken to deal with these issues.

## Classroom climate and atmosphere

A school or classroom climate that supports this unit is one that promotes

- a sense of belonging, through activities such as projects, school concerts, celebrating individual, class and school achievements
- learning and teaching in different types of groups
- involvement by children in negotiating class rules and decision-making
- the democratic process in both the school and the classroom
- the development of individual and group responsibility.

## Teaching approaches

Methods that may be used are:

- drama activities  
*community meetings and exploring community issues*
- using pictures and photographs  
*exploring issues of difference, inequality and discrimination*
- group activities  
*developing group cohesion and skills of working together*
- circle work  
*discussing aspects of community*
- projects  
*exploring the various aspects of life in the local community.*

## Assessment

Techniques that may be used are:

- teacher observation  
*outcomes of conversations between children and between children and teacher;*  
*observing group interaction and the abilities displayed by the children in working together*
- teacher-designed tasks  
*working together*  
*identifying leadership qualities and abilities*  
*leadership: critical analysis of pictures or photographs*
- samples of children's work  
*list of classroom rules*  
*exploration of a photograph*  
*letter sent to a local TD or Minister requesting some information or making a complaint.*

# Topic: The local community

fifth and sixth classes

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## Discrete SPHE time

- examining the contribution of local clubs and organisations to the life of the community
- identifying the facilities in the community for various groups – the elderly, young children, teenagers
- exploring the contribution that children can make to the life of the community
- exploring the positive contributions made by different ethnic and social groups to the life of the local community
- identifying leaders in the local community and their roles



## Geography

- identifying some of the important buildings, features, facilities, parks and work-places in the locality
- learning about and beginning to appreciate the peoples and communities that live in the locality
- exploring and discussing a local issue of concern
- becoming aware of the natural features in the locality
- exploring, investigating and coming to appreciate the major features in the local built environment
- exploring and investigating some of the important economic activities in the local community

## History

- becoming familiar with aspects of the history of games in the locality
- exploring aspects of the leisure interests and games of local people in the past
- actively exploring some features of the local environment
- investigating local variations or similarities in building styles and materials
- studying the development of the local school
- studying a period in history in the locality
- listening to local people telling stories of the past
- collecting local ballads, stories and traditions relating to local events in history

# Exemplar 5

Strand unit: Developing citizenship

fifth and sixth classes

## National, European and wider communities

The child should be enabled to

- become aware of elements of his/her own cultural heritage and traditions
- begin to explore the concept of democracy
- recognise and acknowledge the various cultural, religious, ethnic and other groups in the community and explore ways in which these differences can be respected
- become aware of some of the cultures, life-styles and languages of some of the countries in the European Union and the wider world
- explore how justice and peace can be promoted between people and groups, both nationally and internationally
- realise and begin to understand the unequal distribution of the world's resources.

## Classroom climate and atmosphere

A school or classroom climate that supports this unit is one that

- encourages and facilitates participation in national festivals and celebrations
- provides opportunities for learning and teaching in different types of groups
- encourages the use of inclusive language and practices
- reflects the democratic process in both the school and the classroom
- develops individual and group responsibility
- fosters inclusiveness and is welcoming towards people of different cultures and nationalities.

## Teaching approaches

Methods that may be used are

- using pictures and photographs  
*exploring issues of difference, inequality and discrimination*
- projects  
*examining life-styles in other countries, exploring an issue of injustice or concern to the national community*
- creative writing  
*being Irish, writing to children in other countries*
- information and communication technologies  
*finding up-to-date information on the European Union*
- visitors  
*inviting someone from a different culture to speak to the class*
- surveys  
*identifying attitudes to moving and changing life-styles.*

## Assessment

Techniques that may be used are

- teacher observation  
*outcomes of conversations between children and between children and teacher; observing group interaction and the ways in which children treat each other*
- teacher-designed tasks  
*analysis of photographs, presentation on a project, preparing questions for a visitor, sending a letter of invitation to a visitor, writing an e-mail message requesting information on a topic of national interest*
- samples of children's work  
*letters, extracts from a project, pictures, slogans promoting equality, poem written to a child in another country.*

# Topic: National, European and wider communities

fifth and sixth classes

## Discrete SPHE time

- exploring elements of his/her own cultural heritage and the factors that contribute to his/her national identity
- learning about the role of elections, the President, the Oireachtas and the Constitution
- learning about aspects of the lives of those who live in Europe or in other parts of the world
- exploring and examining the positive contributions made by various social and ethnic groups to society
- exploring differences in society and how discrimination and prejudice can be counteracted
- exploring aspects of life common to people all over the world, such as sport and music

## The visual arts

- creating images of Ireland through different media
- looking at and talking about examples of buildings that are unique to Ireland and to countries in the European Union
- looking at and talking about the work of artists from both Ireland and other countries

## Geography

- becoming aware of Irish involvement in relief agencies
- becoming aware of the various cultural, religious and linguistic groups in Ireland
- exploring and discussing a national or global issue, either environmental or social

## National, European and wider communities

## History

- exploring myths and legends from different cultural and religious backgrounds in Ireland
- learning about the lives of various people during different periods in Ireland

## Music

- listening to and describing Irish musical styles and traditions
- identifying traditional instruments
- performing appropriate songs in both Irish and English
- exploring some musical styles that are native to other countries
- learning some folk songs from around the world

## Language

- practising listening skills
- giving and taking turns in speaking
- reading myths, legends and folklore of Ireland
- discussing with others his/her reactions to national events
- fostering an appreciation of our national language

*There are many different ways of engaging children in their learning*



# Approaches and methodologies

# Approaches and methodologies

## Active learning

- is a process
- can be carried out by individuals or in groups
- engages children at different levels
- promotes action
- places children at the centre of the learning process
- requires the teacher to guide and direct the work
- requires an atmosphere of trust and support.

The approaches and methodologies used in SPHE are crucial to the effectiveness of the programme. While some of the objectives of the curriculum can be achieved through more direct teaching, the emphasis in SPHE is on active learning. Where children are given opportunities to be actively engaged in their learning at many different levels, there is a greater chance that they will

- experience and discover the learning for themselves
- construct new meanings and acquire new understanding
- take increasing responsibility for their own learning
- make their own of the learning and internalise what has been learned
- become more critical and discerning
- be able to transfer the learning to different situations.

## The key features of active learning

Active learning is the principal learning and teaching approach recommended for SPHE. It requires children to actively participate in their learning in a wide variety of ways, thereby increasing the possibility of internalising what they have explored and of being able to use the learning in their everyday lives.

Active learning contributes significantly to fostering self-confidence, self-discipline and self-control in the learner.

- *Active learning* is a process. As children participate meaningfully in their own learning they engage in a process in which they can begin from what they already know, explore possibilities, question, draw conclusions and reflect on outcomes. It is essential that children are given the opportunity to progress through the various stages of the process in order that they can make sense of the learning for themselves and make new connections.
- *Active learning can be carried out by individual children or in group situations and by all age groups.* Children can be actively involved in their learning while working independently or alternatively as they interact with and learn from their classmates. In SPHE there will be a particular emphasis on small-group activities while also recognising that on occasions individual activities might be the most appropriate to the objectives at hand. Active learning can take place at all class levels in the school: infant classes engaging in structured play activities and engaging with materials in all aspects of the curriculum; senior classes critically reflecting on media images and creating news stories.

- *Active learning engages children at different levels.* Children can be engaged in their learning at a *physical* level through hands-on experiences such as making, constructing and designing, or simply in standing up or changing place as a response. They can be involved at an *emotional* level as they explore their feelings about a particular topic, hypothesise or give a personal opinion, whereas analysing, questioning, reflecting, negotiating or summarising require participation at a *cognitive* level. Opportunities should be provided for children to actively engage in their learning at a variety or combination of these levels in order to increase motivation and maximise understanding.
- *Active learning promotes action.* As children take part in activities, they learn to transfer the learning to situations they may encounter in their everyday lives and to the decisions and choices that they make. Active participation in learning is therefore significant in helping children to acquire health-related messages and to put these into practice in their own lives. Similarly, as they learn the meaning of responsible citizenship they are encouraged to take steps to become active participants in their own communities.
- *Active learning places children at the centre of the learning process.* The content of activities for use in the classroom should relate as much as possible to the environment and lives of the children. This ensures that issues explored are relevant and linked to the child's own experience.
- *Active learning requires the teacher to guide and direct the work.* The role of the teacher is crucial to the active learning process. The teacher needs to act as a guide, a facilitator and a resource, providing a variety of appropriate opportunities for children to engage in their own learning. The teacher also needs to continually encourage them to construct meaning and make connections for themselves. How the activities are organised, the depth of exploration and the level of questioning and critical reflection will all be determined by the classroom teacher. The teacher will also be responsible for the provision of a wide variety of strategies, in order to cater for individual needs and to help all children to experience some success.

*In SPHE there is a particular emphasis on children working together.*

- *Active learning requires an atmosphere of trust and support.* Active learning will be most effective when it takes place in an atmosphere of trust and flexibility. Children need to feel secure in giving their own point of view, knowing that they are respected as individuals and that their opinions are valued and taken into account.

In SPHE there is a particular emphasis on children working together. This can include many different types of group interaction, such as collaborative work in small or large groups, structured play activities in the infant classes or co-operative learning activities in twos and threes. Learning as a group can help children to

- develop a shared sense of purpose and achieve a common goal by using the diversity of talents within a group
- develop and practise language skills
- develop a wide range of interpersonal skills, including leadership, communication, delegation and time management
- operate as a social unit and learn from and with each other
- develop an acceptance of each other and respect individual differences by learning to appreciate other points of view, by listening to others, and on occasions by conceding individual objectives in favour of the wider group purpose

- develop a sense of democracy in the class, encouraging them to extend their relationships to those normally outside their circle of friends
- develop higher-order thinking skills, such as asking relevant questions, solving problems in various ways, drawing conclusions, and making informed decisions
- be accountable and develop a sense of responsibility for the learning of others as well as their own learning.

The most effective group work takes place in groups of twos and threes, particularly in the earlier years in school. As the children gain experience in group practices they will be able to work effectively in larger groups. Positive learning outcomes do not automatically occur because children are sitting in close proximity: efficient group learning requires the development of a wide range of learning and social skills and a competent classroom management system.

Group processes in the class will be more effective when

- *they are introduced at an early age and over time.* The skills required of children will take some time to develop and will be greatly enhanced if practised from the earliest possible age. Skills in turn-taking, listening, voicing opinions, recording ideas and reaching consensus are all prerequisites for effective group learning.

- *roles are assigned to each member of the group.* A useful way to promote real and meaningful learning in a group is to assign a particular role to each group member. Having a role will ensure that all children contribute to the learning process and that the outcomes will be dependent on the combined work of the whole group. These roles should vary depending on the needs of the children, their experience in group learning, and the nature of the activity.
- *the process is regularly reviewed.* The teacher will have to regularly monitor how learning is happening in the groups to ensure that children are benefiting from the process and that the objectives are being achieved. The opinions and views of the children will be central to this process, as will the informal observations of the teacher.

## Some recommended strategies for active learning

The exemplars on the following pages illustrate a variety of strategies that encourage the child to be an active agent in his/her own learning. Some of those outlined are appropriate for acquiring information, some for exploring opinions and viewpoints, and others for developing and practising skills.

Teachers can choose a particular strategy depending on the objectives of the lesson, the needs and ability levels of the children, and the resources available.

Flexibility and variety are crucial to the use of any of these strategies. An open-ended question could be used as a starting point for a lesson, and this could be followed by encouraging the children to explore, say, a picture. The lesson could conclude with children drawing up a list of strategies for dealing with the issues before them. Most of the recommended techniques can be used with all age groups.

Links for integration with specific subject areas are evident in many of the exemplars in the following pages. This will help teachers in planning and organising the most effective use of active learning in SPHE and within other subjects.

The strategies outlined in this section are:

- *drama activities*
- *co-operative games*
- *pictures, photographs and visual images*
- *discussion*
- *written activities*
- *the media and information and communication technologies*
- *looking at children's work.*

# Drama activities

Drama provides active learning situations that explore human relationships, behaviour and events. Through drama children can express their present feelings, understanding and knowledge and are led to new feelings, new understanding and new knowledge. Drama involves the child in a process that is fun, active and intrinsically related to his/her existing experience of play and other forms of interactive and imitative behaviour.

Using drama as a methodology in SPHE can help to heighten self-esteem and self-confidence by providing opportunities for children to take risks and to experiment with their own ideas. Through the activities children are given a sense of control over their own lives as they learn how to make decisions, solve problems and devise solutions in a safe, non-threatening situation. Drama can be effectively used to foster appropriate social behaviour by exploring different social situations, by expressing feelings, giving points of view, and listening genuinely to others or participating in group meetings.

Through drama, children are also helped to make sense of the world around them and to begin to understand themselves and their own behaviour in relation to the behaviour of others. In projecting themselves into a situation, children assume attitudes and behaviour that may not necessarily be their own. Playing a role allows them to become aware of some of the demands of that role in real life and to learn something of the person, the situation and the problem involved.

Dramatic activity can take place in pairs and in small or large groups.

### Pair activities include

- making a complaint
- resolving a conflict
- conducting an interview
- giving an explanation
- conducting a phone conversation.

### Group activities include

- exploring responses to different situations
- a family situation, for example eating together
- listener-speaker-observer activities
- developing questioning skills.

### Whole-class activities include

- a court of inquiry
- a class meeting
- a press conference
- a trial.

*The exemplars on the next few pages illustrate how various aspects of the SPHE content can be explored using a variety of drama strategies. These strategies and how they can be developed are described in detail in the teacher guidelines for drama.*



The teacher can give direction and focus to the work of a large group.

# Exemplar 1

## Drama activities

## infant classes

*Objective: to enable children to engage in solving a problem and to increase language acquisition*

- The teacher *discusses* the picture with the children.

- Children *improvise* the situation with the teacher as one of the group.
- *Negotiate* which stripe they are colouring and why.
- *Mime* various activities.
- *Thought tracking*: Pause and explore reactions and feelings at this point.
- *Narration*: The teacher advances the story by narrating some more of the details.
- *Discuss* with the children in role whether they are brave enough to go to the castle and confront the giant. Explore what they might say and who might speak for them.
- The children *mime* folding the pieces very carefully.
- *Discuss* what could be put in the letter, and write it out for the children to see.
- Create a *sense of tension* as children are leaving the castle. Explore with children in what ways they could mend the rainbow.

- *Class discussion*.

### Stage 1

Using a picture of a rainbow, explore what it is and when children think they might see it.

### Stage 2

Tell the children that they live in a village, under a rainbow, which they see whenever they look up into the sky. It is their job to keep it in good repair, so today they are out on their ladders painting a stripe of their own choosing. Encourage them not to let the paint drip and to keep between the lines. The rainbow is in good repair so that they can go on their holidays. When they have finished, the children lie down and go to sleep.

The next morning they go out and see that the rainbow is full of holes. The children are dismayed and very surprised. It looks as if they can't go on their holidays. The holes are all shapes: squares, rectangles, circles, triangles. What are they going to do?

As they look down they see a giant footstep. The giant has taken pieces from the rainbow. As they look up the hill to the castle they see some of the cut-out shapes hanging on a line outside the castle.

They travel to the castle, and on entering the castle through the drawbridge they see the giant making preparations for a party, and he is using some of the cut-outs from the rainbow as colourful flags around the room and others as table napkins for the guests. The children take back the pieces of cloth, folding them very carefully, and they leave a letter explaining why they took back the pieces.

They then creep out of the castle in a hurry so as not to run into the giant. When they return to the village they mend the rainbow so that they can go on their holidays.

### Stage 3

Out of the story the teacher reflects with the children on how they solved the problem and explores any issues that may have arisen. What if the giant had appeared in the room, or a fight had broken out when the children were mending the rainbow?

# Exemplar 2

## Drama activities

## first and second classes

*Objective: to enable the children to learn to negotiate, to listen and to support each other*

- The children *listen* very carefully to the extract.
- *Teacher in role*  
*Teacher narrative:* building the story in a controlled way. Children can *mime* some of the games the child would be playing outdoors on a warm day.
- The children create a *still picture* illustrating the little girl's dilemma. Group discussion.
- Whole *group in role*.
- Provide *tension* in the story.
- Individual *children can play the role* of the little elf.
- The children *play out in pairs* the scenario between the elf and the little boy, exploring the language one could use and what options were available.
- *Class discussion* outside the drama exploring different aspects of the story.

### Stage 1

In a circle, the children listen to extracts from 'Peter and the Wolf' or any similar piece of music that creates a sense of a summer day and the outdoors. Explore the music with the children, eliciting from them what it could suggest, where it might be, who is there, or how they are feeling.

### Stage 2

The teacher adopts the role of a child playing hide and seek with friends in the local wood on a summer's day. The little girl was given an old coin by her grandfather, and she brought it to show all her friends. As they were leaving to go home the little girl noticed that the coin was missing. She couldn't return home without it. What was she going to do?

### Stage 3

Freeze the story and explore with the children what the options might be.

### Stage 4

The children search everywhere for the missing coin. As they are searching in the wood, encourage them to identify all the sounds they might hear, for example bird calls, leaves rustling or cart wheels creaking. After a while they hear someone talking. The person is too far away for them to make out the words and they don't know who it might be, so someone must creep up and listen and watch. The children practise walking quietly and listening. They hear a little elf counting his money and singing to himself. One of the children volunteers to go and talk to the little elf. He explains that he found the coin and that therefore it is his. Several volunteers go and try to persuade the elf to change his mind. Finally one quiet little boy convinces the elf to give up the coin, and the children return home.

### Stage 5

The children come out of the drama and together they explore the different aspects of the story. For example, should the child have had the coin? Why did the elf not want to give it back? How did the little boy persuade him? Should the little girl be punished? How did her friends help her? Should the children have talked to the little elf in the wood?

### Extension work

Ask the children to write their own account of the story and the possible outcome when the little boy returned home. Alternatively, they could recount and record similar situations where negotiation and persuasion were required.



Make-believe play: 'Where is my Grandad's coin?'

# Exemplar 3

Drama activities

third and fourth classes

*Objective: to help the child to explore and implement different ways of resolving conflict.*

- The teacher can introduce various strategies to the children for resolving conflict and some of these can be dramatised in pairs or groups in order for children to understand how they operate.
- *Discussion* in pairs on the content of the picture, where the children identify the nature of the conflict, who is involved, and the point at which the picture was taken.
- *Pair improvisation.*
- *Still image.* The children freeze the action at a particular point to allow time to reveal their feelings and to track any thoughts they may have at that moment.
- While the children are *discussing* their ideas the teacher can move between the pairs and provide help to those who might need direction.
- *Dramatising the resolutions.*
- The *role of the teacher* will be central to this discussion. In some situations the children will not have been able to solve the conflict appropriately or may not have been able to reach a satisfactory outcome. All these angles will have to be explored.

## Introduction

Discuss with the children the various ways in which we deal with a conflict, including bullying to get one's own way, giving in, looking for outside help, and agreeing on a compromise. Encourage children to see that there can be different solutions to various problems.

## Stage 1

Present the children with a conflict that could arise between two siblings. This could be presented through a poem or a story or from a situation given by one of the children. In this lesson the conflict is presented in a picture with an accompanying caption. The situation is discussed, with the children identifying what is happening in the picture. (The teacher chooses an appropriate picture for the lesson.)

## Stage 2

The children are asked in pairs to improvise the situation that is happening in the picture. The pairs take on the roles of the two children and build up the tension that is evident in the picture. Some of these enactments can be played out for the class. Once the conflict has been portrayed, the children are asked to freeze the action.

## Stage 3

Each pair is given some time and asked to explore the possibilities of resolving the conflict, keeping in mind the introductory discussion.

## Stage 4

Some of the pairs act out their resolution. In role, the individual pairs can recount their own feelings about the way in which the conflict was resolved.

## Stage 5

The class come together and explore the various strategies used. The following questions can focus this discussion:

- Was this the most appropriate strategy?
- Did both people feel happy with the outcome?
- If a resolution was not reached, why not?
- Are there any other ways of dealing with this problem?

In conclusion, the children draw together the steps that one could take in resolving a conflict:

- naming the problem
- exploring ways of resolving it and then choosing the most appropriate one.

## Extension

The children could re-enact the situation or a similar problem using various strategies. Equally they could illustrate, write about or use any other medium to express their own view of the situation.

They could also discuss and explore the poem 'Do You Mind' by Eric Finney.

*This lesson could be carried out over an extended period*

# Exemplar 4

## Drama activities

fifth and sixth classes

*Objective: to enable the children to explore issues related to their local community and to develop strategies for resolving these through using various dramatic techniques*

### Stage 1

Present the children with an issue that could occur in their local community or in school, for example a school safety issue. This could be a real-life decision (using a report from a local newspaper) or an anecdotal situation. The one used in this lesson is based on the poem 'This Letter's to Say' by Raymond Wilson. Read the poem aloud to the class (text is on page 64).

### Stage 2

In groups of four or five, the children explore the various sides of the issue.

### Stage 3

The class come together as the residents in the area, present their opinions and decide on a course of action.

### Stage 4

The children (in role) identify what they would say to the official who wrote the letter if he was sitting in the chair in front of them. Groups of children can get together to decide on what they will say. Alternatively the teacher (as the official who wrote the letter) can meet the residents.

### Stage 5

With one child as a resident and the other as the official, a meeting is arranged. Give the pair time to discuss and develop the drama. Some of these discussions can be played out for the rest of the class.

### Stage 6

Returning to their groups or in class discussion, they can reflect on the meeting, explore how the issue was resolved, if indeed it was resolved, and if not, why not, and the actions considered. Explore the attitudes of different people, the most appropriate ways of putting forward a point of view, and improved ways of running a meeting.

### Extension work

Children could write a reply to the official or prepare a report for a local radio station or a newspaper. Explore similar situations that may have occurred in the area and examine how they were resolved.

- *Group exploration* of the problem and the issues involved. This can involve doing some background research.
- Class meeting with the *teacher in role* either as the chairperson or as a member of the residents' group. The teacher can move the drama along by asking leading questions, responding to answers given, and bringing people into the discussion.
- Placing an *empty chair* at the top (centre) of the classroom, the children address their feelings towards the empty chair. The teacher can adopt the position of intermediary, where he/she is only passing on a message.
- *Pairs playing out* this particular episode.
- Class or *group discussion* where children can reflect on what happened.

## This Letter's to Say

Raymond Wilson

*Dear Sir or Madam  
This letter's to say  
Your property  
Stands bang in the way  
Of progress, and  
Will be knocked down  
On March the third  
At half-past one.*

*There is no appeal  
Since the National Need  
Depends on more  
And still more speed  
And this, in turn  
Dear Sir or Madam  
Depends on half England  
Being tar-macadam  
But your house will—  
We are pleased to say—  
Be the fastest lane of the motorway.*

*Meanwhile the Borough  
Corporation  
Offer you new  
Accommodation  
Three miles away  
On the thirteenth floor  
(Flat number Q  
6824)*

*But please take note  
The council regret  
No dog, cat, bird  
Or other pet:  
No noise permitted  
No singing in the bath  
(For permits to drink, or smoke or laugh  
Apply on form  
Z327)*

*No children admitted  
Aged under eleven:  
No hawkers, tramps  
Or roof-top lunches;  
No opening doors  
To bible-punchers  
Failure to pay  
Your rent, when due  
Will lead to our evicting you  
The Council demand  
That you consent  
To the terms above  
When you pay your rent.*

*Meanwhile we hope  
You will feel free  
To consult us  
Should there prove to be  
The slightest case  
of difficulty*

*With kind regards  
Yours faithfully,*

# Co-operative games

Games are a valuable means of helping children to work together in a caring and co-operative way. Games can raise the level of co-operative consciousness and help children to realise what they can learn from each other. They are a fun and interesting way of learning to work together and of respecting the contribution of each individual. Games include all children and are particularly helpful for dealing with sensitive issues, such as those of ethnic groups, sex roles and equality.

Games give children the opportunity to practise a range of skills, to be a member of a team, to raise their self-esteem, and to be effective group members. They learn to talk openly about fair shares, turns for everyone, vulnerability, risk-taking and common needs. Co-operative games can awaken children's curiosity about themselves, the groups in which they find themselves, and people's individual and social needs.

Some of the most valuable work takes place during the discussion that follows these co-operative games, and time needs to be given to this important element of the activity. This gives children the chance to evaluate their work, to talk about it together in the group, to discuss successes, and to plan for future activities. A range of games are available that cater for different needs. These include encouraging appropriate behaviour and solving particular problems, as an introductory activity or as a winding down after an intense activity.

Games provide an opportunity for having fun while learning and create a more relaxed atmosphere in the class. They range from active games that require space for movement to quieter board games and table activities that can be used in the classroom.

The following pages contain two exemplars illustrating co-operative games appropriate for infant classes and for third to sixth classes.

# Exemplar 5

## Co-operative games

### Sample lesson plan

#### Stage 1

Explain the activity to the children. Each child is given a crown (a circle of cardboard), which they balance on top of their heads. (For older children, objects such as bean bags or small cushions could be used.)

#### Stage 2

The children then move around the room to the music. If a crown falls off, that child becomes a statue and cannot move until another child comes along and replaces the crown on top of the statue's head.

#### Stage 3

This is the winding-down phase, and all the children can be brought together to reflect on what happened during the game. It will be particularly important to note whether the children were co-operating. It will also be essential to affirm the actions of those who were helpful and co-operative.

#### Variation

Very young children may have difficulty focusing on the task when there are large numbers of children moving around the room. It may be helpful to have children work in pairs. One partner from each pair can sit in a circle around the sides of the room, while the other moves to the music. If the moving partner's crown falls off, he/she is frozen until the sitting partner returns to his/her place. The partners should switch roles every few minutes.

Strand unit: Relating to others

Objective: to promote co-operation while having fun

Class: junior and senior infants



# Exemplar 6

## Co-operative games

### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Relating to others

Objective: to help children understand non-verbal communication

Class: fourth to sixth classes

#### Stage 1

The class is divided into teams with approximately six to eight children in each team. These teams then line up with each child facing the back of another child. The children are told that there is to be no talking during the activity.

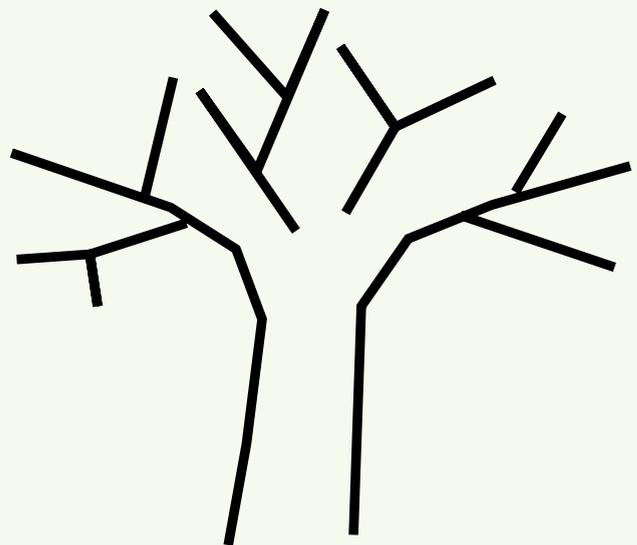
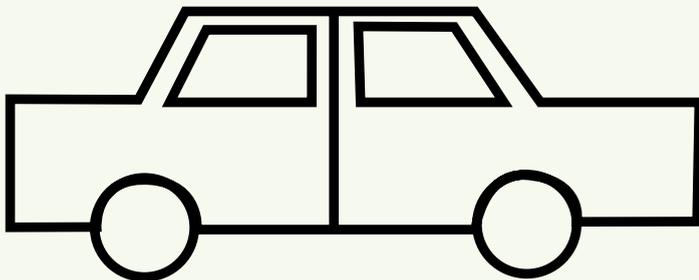
#### Stage 2

The last person in each team is given an illustration and told to draw the illustration using their finger on the back of the person directly in front of them. This procedure is carried on up the line until it reaches the first person. Then he/she must draw the picture as he/she has received it.

#### Stage 3

The final pictures are compared with the originals. The children can engage in reflection, exploring issues such as

- the accuracy of the pictures
- why they were accurate or inaccurate
- the difficulties encountered
- what would have helped the process
- what they learned.



# Pictures, photographs and visual images



Pictures, photographs and visual images may be used in a number of different ways in SPHE. Children need to develop skills of discernment and critical analysis to deal with much of the conflicting information and misinformation that they receive from various sources. Pictures and photographs are a powerful means of provoking a reaction or arousing interest in a particular topic or subject.

Examining visual images enables the children to

- explore bias
- question the content of an image
- explore different points of view
- compare their own experience with reality
- explore attitudes and understanding of certain concepts
- examine stereotyping and the similarities and differences between people.



Pictures are a helpful means of presenting sensitive or controversial information to children. For example, naming the private parts of the body can be effectively taught by using an illustration from a book and discussing it with a group of four or five children. When the children are older the teacher could use appropriate pictures to help them understand the growth of the foetus in the womb. Exploring a picture in a small group allows the teacher to create the security in which individual children can ask questions and to grade information according to the readiness of individual children.

Pictures and photographs can be used in many ways within a lesson. They can provoke a discussion or provide the incentive for engaging in another activity. Photographs can also be used as the main activity, where the photograph can be explored and analysed and used to elicit ideas from the children.

Pictures or photographs used in the class can be taken from a magazine or newspaper or from a professionally produced picture pack.

In exploring visual images children will also become familiar with some of the techniques used by the media. They could identify techniques used in advertisements or extracts from television programmes and so become critical media users.

In the following pages the exemplars explore a number of techniques, including

- reading a photograph
- using pictures as a stimulus for discussion or in determining previously acquired knowledge about an issue
- ranking pictures
- exploring perspectives and bias
- using captions
- creating speech/thought bubbles
- classifying and setting
- exploring a television advertisement.

# Exemplar 7

## Reading a photograph

Photographs can help children learn how to ask different types of questions. This is often called 'reading' a photograph. Children need to become critical in their approach and be able to discern what is or is not significant in a picture. The process of questioning a photograph will help to identify the issues a child is most interested in and those that need further exploration.

As children learn to read photographs they can focus on

- a general description of what is happening in the picture
- a detailed description of the content
- the aspects of the picture that remain unclear
- the way the photographer has selected the picture or the message he or she is trying to convey
- linking the incident in the picture to general concepts
- noting and describing the personal feelings that the picture evokes in the child.

### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Relating to others

Objective: to enable the child to question the information presented in a picture and to explore the issue of disability

Class: fourth to sixth classes

#### Stage 1

A photograph is placed on a large sheet of chart paper and given to each group of children in the class. Ask the children to look carefully at the picture for a few minutes. (The photograph includes a person with a disability).

#### Stage 2

The children then think of as many questions as possible that they would like to ask about the picture and write these around the picture. Some of the questions should be related to the content of the photograph and others should relate to wider issues. The charts are displayed around the classroom and the groups in turn read the questions posed by the other groups.

#### Stage 3

The children reflect on the questions asked:

- Were any aspects of the picture ignored?
- Can all the questions that were posed be answered?
- What did you learn from these questions?
- What information can you readily glean from the picture?
- Was there a difference between the questions asked by the different groups?
- What do you think is the most important question to ask about any photograph?

#### Stage 4

In conclusion the children can explore what they discovered about disability and some of the attitudes that can often be portrayed about disability in the media.

# Exemplar 8

## Pictures as a stimulus for discussion

Pictures and photographs are an effective way of provoking a discussion in class. As children either individually or in small groups, examine a visual image, they begin to identify various aspects of a topic. A discussion based on a picture or photograph can help children to explore an issue in some depth and also provide an incentive for further study.

### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Safety issues

Objective: to enable the children to identify safety risks in the kitchen and to draw up an appropriate safety strategy for this room

Class: third to sixth classes

#### Stage 1

Present groups of children with a picture of a kitchen.

#### Stage 2

The children are asked to study the picture and as a group to draw up a list of the possible risks to safety. The list would include:

- the iron left plugged in
- a broken flex in the toaster
- the press door left open
- a poisonous substance in a lower press and a small child playing nearby
- a bag at the foot of the stairs
- a pot boiling over on the cooker
- the tap left running.

#### Stage 3

The children present their lists to the class and the teacher compiles the information. As a class they explore what may have gone unnoticed.

#### Stage 4

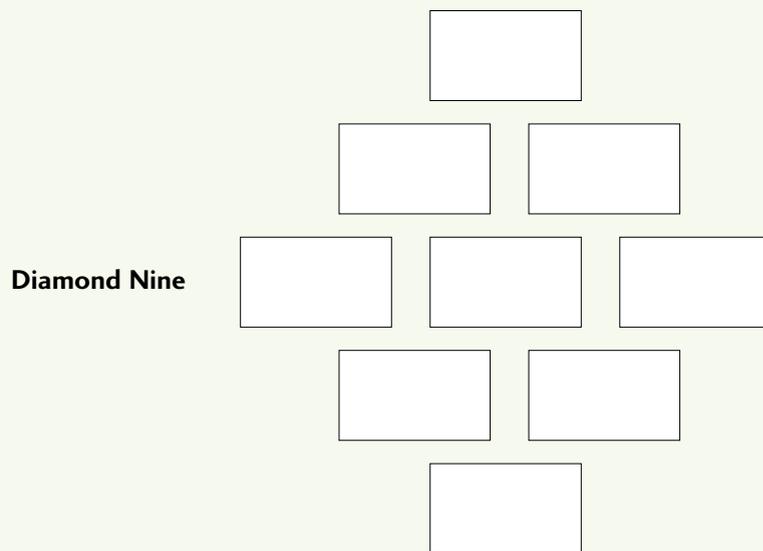
The children return to their groups and are given two or three risks that were identified and are asked to explore ways in which these risks could be minimised. In this way they create a safety strategy for the kitchen. This can include other aspects that may have come into the discussion and may not have been included in the picture.



# Exemplar 9

## Ranking pictures

In a ranking exercise children are required to arrange pictures or photographs in an order that is agreed by the whole group. This arrangement usually takes the form of a diamond, where nine pictures are used, with the most important placed at the top of the diamond, the least important at the base, and the others placed in between.



### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Health and well-being

Objective: to help children understand the concept of what it means to be healthy

Class: fifth and sixth classes

*Health is a resource for everyday life, not an object of living, it is a positive concept emphasising social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities.*

World Health Organisation, 1984

#### Stage 1

The teacher collects a number of pictures representing different aspects of health, ranging from unhealthy to healthy. These should include a variety of pictures depicting all aspects of health, including the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional aspects.

#### Stage 2

The children are divided into small groups and given a pack of pictures. They are asked to place the pictures in a diamond shape, with the healthiest picture at the top. They then rank the other pictures, placing the least healthy picture, in their opinion, at the bottom.

#### Stage 3

On completion, the groups present their ranking order to the rest of the class, explaining the reasons for their choice.

#### Stage 4

Through a class discussion the children can draw conclusions about the meaning of health. It will be important that the teacher identifies what understanding the children have of being healthy and, by appropriate questioning, leads them to appreciate that health relates to the mind, the body, and the spirit.

#### Stage 5

In groups, the children present their definition of health in a medium of their own choosing, drawing together the ideas they learned from the activity. The presentation of the definition could be created using a word-processing or publishing program.

# Exemplar 10

## Exploring bias

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Children begin to understand the concept of bias as they become discerning and critical about the information presented in various illustrations. As they are encouraged to question the accuracy of information and to reflect on the perspective taken, children begin to appreciate that there may be more than 'one side' to a story. This increased awareness leads to an understanding of bias and can make them more sensitive to it in their everyday lives.

### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: The local community

Objective: to explore the role of bias in the portrayal of the locality

Class: third to sixth classes

#### Stage 1

Children are given three or four pictures or postcards that depict the locality. In groups, they examine these pictures very carefully and explore the following questions:

- What is the message being given about the area in each picture?
- Is this message an accurate one, and if not, why not?
- What is the purpose of this picture?

#### Stage 2

The groups present their conclusions to the rest of the class. The discussion could focus on the perspective of the photographer, compared with the viewpoints held by the people of the area.

#### Stage 3

Following the discussion the children return to their groups and decide on the representation that they would use to accurately depict their own area.

#### Stage 4

Children can present their illustration to the class and explain their own perspective. The pictures can be compared and contrasted and note taken of differences and similarities between pictures.

#### Stage 5

In reflecting on the activity, the children will realise that perspectives vary significantly and are influenced by a number of factors.

# Exemplar 11

## Pictures as a starting point

As educators we can often make assumptions about what children know about a particular issue or topic. By asking them to gather a selection of pictures, photographs or illustrations on a chosen topic we are provided with a starting point and are given a sense of the current thinking in the class. Some issues which would benefit from such an initial exploration are: safe places, prejudice, my local community, fear, the older generation or healthy eating.

### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Media education or  
My friends and other people

Objective: to enable the  
children to identify all the  
different types of people they  
are aware of, through pictures  
in newspapers and magazines

Class: junior and senior infants

#### Stage 1

Children are divided into groups of four, and each group is given a large sheet of sugar paper, paste and, where appropriate, a pair of scissors. They are also given a number of old newspapers and magazines. They are asked to cut or tear out pictures of different people. These could include a child, a pregnant woman, a baby, a shopkeeper, a teenager or an old person.

#### Stage 2

The children paste their pictures onto the paper and, where possible, write a title under each picture.

#### Stage 3

The group can explain who each person is and why they chose particular pictures. The teacher can encourage them to elaborate on their chart by exploring

- who their favourite person is, and why
- who they would have liked to find in the pictures and didn't
- whether the pictures accurately represent these people.



# Exemplar 12

## Captions

Exploring captions can help children to become more discerning about what is presented to them in all sorts of illustrations. The way we read a photograph can be influenced by a caption, and where a caption is changed the meaning can be also altered significantly. Giving children opportunities to design captions themselves will help this sense of awareness. As it is not always easy to think of a caption some preparatory work would be helpful. The children could write a description of the photograph or tell a story about it that might prompt the creation of an appropriate caption. It is also useful to identify the audience for whom the caption is intended.

### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Media education or Developing citizenship

Objective: to become aware of how pictures can be interpreted in different ways and used to influence opinions

Class: third to sixth classes

#### Stage 1

Present children in groups with a collection of captions based on a significant story that was covered by a number of newspapers. The children examine the different captions and decide on the perspective chosen by each of the newspapers. The groups explore their impressions and compare and contrast the use of various pictures and their effects.

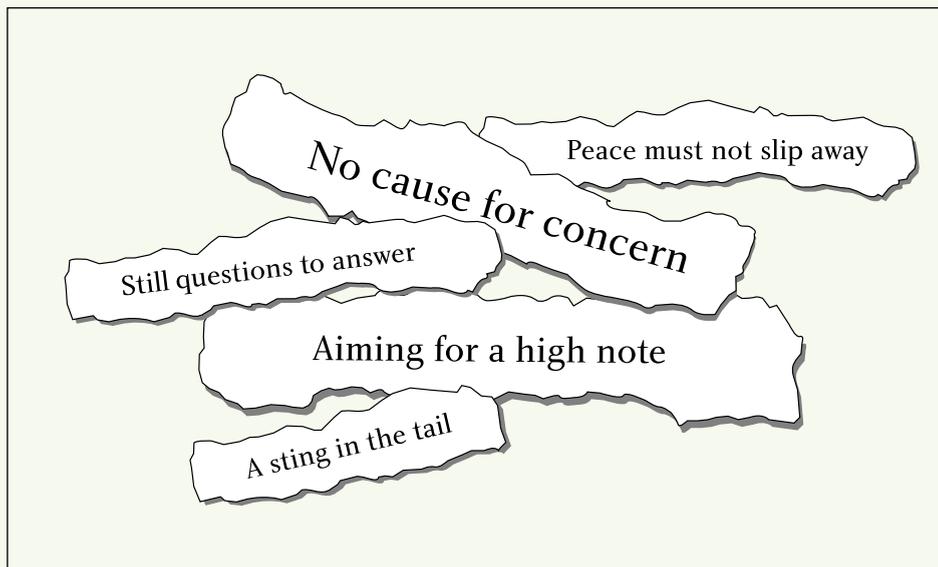
#### Stage 2

One or two newspaper pictures are given to each group. The pictures will be the same for each group and have no captions. Each group decides on an appropriate caption. They paste their pictures onto a chart and write the agreed captions underneath. These charts are then placed around the classroom for the rest of the class to examine. They then come together and discuss

- what their favourite caption is, and why
- the variety of the captions
- the reason for such variety
- the effects captions have on the reader.

#### Alternative activity

Children are presented with a number of pictures without captions and a number of captions in an envelope. Each group has to match a picture with one of the captions. These can be pasted onto a chart for ease of viewing by all the class. The findings can be compared and contrasted, emphasising how different perspectives influence the choice of caption.



# Exemplar 13

## Speech/thought bubbles

Speech bubbles require children to focus on the non-verbal communication in a given picture or photograph. As they examine a range of pictures, children begin to realise the significance of non-verbal behaviour and the different ways of interpreting body language. This can make children more sensitive to others and more aware of what is not being said.

Thought bubbles allow children to present their own thoughts and feelings on a particular issue, and can be used effectively to begin or conclude an activity.



### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Relating to others

Objective: to enable children to explore non-verbal communication

Class: all classes

#### Stage 1

Divide the children into pairs and present each pair with a photograph or picture from a newspaper or magazine. They can then make and cut out a speech bubble for each character. With younger children the teacher could give them the speech bubbles already prepared and ask them to fill them in.

#### Stage 2

Ask the children to study the pictures carefully, observing

- the facial expressions of the characters
- their distance from or proximity to the other characters and to the camera
- the feelings of the individuals portrayed.

#### Stage 3

With this information the pairs compose a speech bubble for each of the characters in the picture. These are displayed around the class for other children to examine.

#### Stage 4

The children come together and explore the level of information that can be gleaned from non-verbal communication and give examples of occasions when they have used non-verbal communication to give information or a message of any kind.

# Exemplar 14

## Classifying and setting

This approach requires children to classify pictures or objects into particular categories. There are many variations to this approach; for example, children could be asked to re-categorise objects, pictures or statements according to new criteria, thereby creating new categories. In presenting their work the children are asked to defend their categorisation and to explore aspects of overlap. The findings can also be recorded, depending on the age and experience of the class.

### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Food and nutrition

Objective: to distinguish between food that is grown and food that comes from animals

Class: junior and senior infants

#### Stage 1

The children are asked to identify some of the foods that they eat every day. These are then recorded on the blackboard in pictorial or symbolic form. They are encouraged to discuss any observations on these findings.

#### Stage 2

The children are placed in groups of four or five and are given a box containing pictures of food items or empty packets of food items. They are asked to categorise these according to those that are grown and those that come from animals.

#### Stage 3

The children record their findings by placing the objects or pictures in two sets.

#### Stage 4

They can then present and discuss their findings and should be encouraged to state the reasons for their choice.

#### Extension work

The children can return to their groups and re-categorise the pictures or objects according to different criteria, for example foods I like or don't like; food that is cooked or uncooked. The data can be represented and interpreted in an appropriate form.



# Exemplar 15

## Exploring a television advertisement

It is essential that children are given opportunities to look at television extracts and to learn to analyse the context and the techniques being used. They can become familiar with techniques such as lighting, voice-overs, camera ranges and sound effects as they use them in recording and presenting their own work in class.

Children should also be encouraged to explore and discuss types of audiences and to critique an advertisement or programme in terms of audience suitability.

### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Media education

Objective: to enable children to analyse a television advertisement

Class: third to sixth classes

#### Stage 1

Present the children with a number of photographs or slides. Ask them to choose one photograph and to look at it carefully for a few minutes. Encourage them to look at it in three different parts: the background, the middle and the foreground. Through questioning, the teacher can elicit clues that give meaning to the picture:

- What is the picture trying to say?
- Who is in the picture?
- What are they doing?
- Where was the camera operator standing?
- Do the people in the photograph know they are being photographed?

#### Stage 2

Play a television advertisement for the children. Encourage them to look at the advertisement closely a number of times. Ask the children to answer the following questions in their own groups and to share their conclusions with the other groups:

- How are the words and images linked?
- What sort of sets have been constructed?
- What sort of characters are being portrayed?
- How many changes of scene are there?
- What is the pacing like?
- What kind of shots are used? Are they long shots or close-ups?

#### Stage 3

Explore the music used in the advertisement:

- What kind of music is used and is it appropriate to the product?
- What would the advertisement be like without the music?
- Do you receive the same message without the music?

#### Stage 4

The teacher can prepare a list of questions based on television advertisements. These could include playing samples of music from a variety of advertisements or identifying personalities or catch-phrases associated with particular products.

In the form of a table quiz, the children can give the answers as a group. They are allocated points according to the number of correct answers recorded.

#### Extension work

The children could create their own advertisement for a particular product using a word-processing or publishing program or any other medium.

# Discussion

There are many ways of promoting discussion with children: in pairs, in small groups or with the whole class. It can be used as an introductory activity, where the children identify all the ideas associated with a particular topic. This is a useful way of assessing what the children know and of establishing where gaps exist in their knowledge. The ideas can be recorded and used as the basis for further exploration.

A discussion can also be used as the principal activity in a lesson where children are encouraged to explore a topic or theme in some detail by presenting their own viewpoints and listening and responding to the opinions and views of others. The conclusion of an activity or the reflection stage can equally take the

form of a discussion, where ideas and suggestions that emerged from a class activity can be teased out and clarified. This will enable children to reach a deeper understanding and to derive greater meaning from a particular activity.

Discussion is an element of almost all activities, but particularly useful strategies for promoting discussion and dialogue with children are

- open-ended statements
- brainstorming
- circle work
- agree or disagree
- creating pictures and posters
- debates, quizzes or soapbox
- interviews
- stories
- poems
- exploring a piece of music.

The following exemplars illustrate how some of these strategies can be used to explore aspects of SPHE. The emphasis in all the activities is on interactive exploration among the children in the class and between the child and the teacher.



Paired discussion in the middle classes

# Exemplar 16

## Open-ended statements/questions

Open-ended statements or open-ended questions are a useful means of allowing children to gather their own thoughts and for the teacher to ascertain what viewpoint or opinion the children already hold. This can provide the starting point for the exploration.

These are appropriate prompts for discussion and exploration and can be used in a variety of contexts, such as

One thing I know about drugs is ...

A smoker is someone who ...

What facilities are available for older people in our area?

The time I was most frightened was ...

When I think of alcohol the words I think of are ...

Addiction is ...

Older people have the right to ...

People who take drugs are ...

### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Safety and protection

Objective: to explore the extent of smoking throughout the country and to make children more aware of the dangers of smoking to their health

Class: fifth and sixth classes

#### Stage 1

Present the class with the following open-ended question:

*Out of every hundred Irish adults, how many do you think smoke cigarettes or tobacco regularly?*

#### Stage 2

Divide the class into pairs or small groups. Ask each group to discuss this question and to arrive at a consensus. All the groups compare and contrast their suggestions and explain why they gave a particular figure.

#### Stage 3

The teacher supplies the class with the official statistics (available from the Health Promotion Unit of the Department of Health and Children). The children can then use the information to estimate how many people in the local town or village smoke. Averaging each person at twenty cigarettes per day, the children can also estimate the amount of money spent on cigarettes in the town or village.

#### Stage 4

The children discuss their findings, focusing on the dangers of smoking, the extent of the problem, and the cost of it to the person.



Examples of documents available from The Health Promotion Unit, Department of Health and Children

# Exemplar 17

## Brainstorming

During brainstorming, children are asked to express their thoughts, and these are collected on the blackboard or on an overhead transparency. The general rules for brainstorming are: share whatever comes to mind that is relevant; no put-downs or criticisms of any idea are permitted, and every idea counts. After a range of ideas are gathered it is useful to look for patterns or groupings of the ideas or to invite children to reflect on some of the suggestions. Brainstorming is a good starting point for a discussion, as it allows children to put forward their own ideas and can emphasise aspects that may not have been considered.

Issues that could be explored are

- types of protective clothing that could be worn
- kinds of accidents
- all the hygiene products that could be used
- unsafe products in the home or school
- fast foods
- feelings
- individual words, for example 'alcohol', 'drugs', 'light', 'beauty'.

### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Safety and protection

Objective: to become aware of how accidents can happen and to identify prevention strategies

Class: third to sixth classes

#### Stage 1

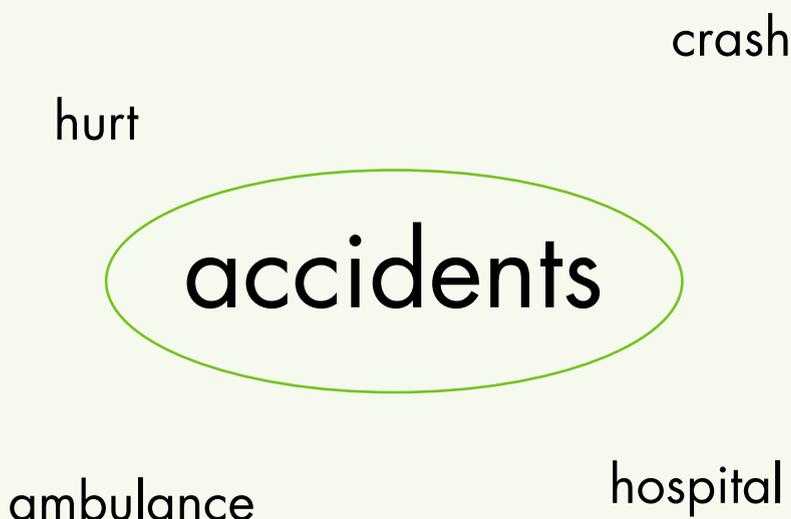
The teacher can write the word 'accidents' on the blackboard. The children try to think of as many ideas as possible that are related to this word. All the suggestions are recorded. The class subsequently discusses the findings and identifies words or ideas that might have been omitted.

#### Stage 2

The children are divided into pairs or small groups and presented with a number of pictures, each representing a different place, for example the kitchen, the school, the playground, the shopping centre or the local park. In their groups the children enumerate the possible accidents that could happen in these places. They then report their conclusions to the class.

#### Stage 3

The class can engage in a discussion on the causes of accidents and are encouraged to focus on individual responsibility in preventing accidents. They can also identify the type of preventive action that could be taken in any of these situations.

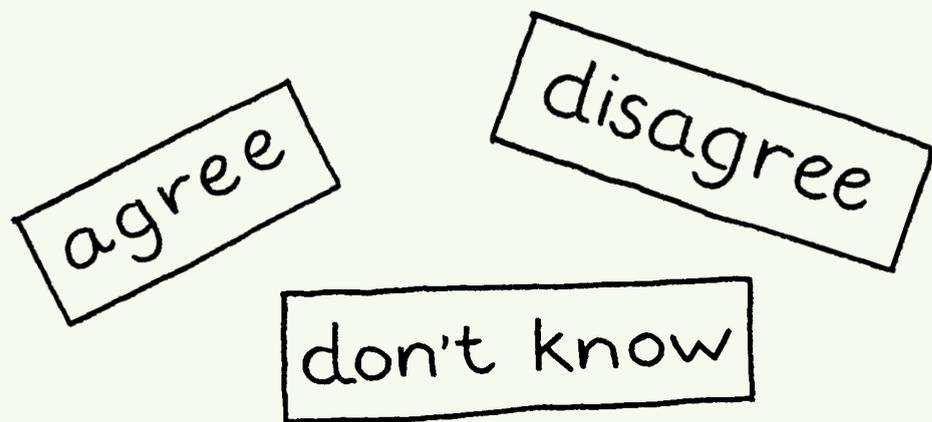


# Exemplar 18

## Agree or disagree

A very useful technique for encouraging children to express their own opinion is to ask them to take a stance on an issue and to defend or explain their position. This can happen in different ways:

- engaging children in a discussion and giving them the opportunity to say ‘I agree’ or ‘I disagree’
- placing posters with **Agree**, **Disagree** or **Don’t know** in strategic positions in the classroom. Children are asked to place themselves beside the poster that represents their opinion
- giving children in groups postcards with the words ‘**Agree**’, ‘**Disagree**’ or ‘**Don’t know**’ on them. Once the teacher calls out a particular phrase the children discuss the issue in a group and hold up the card that represents the opinion of the group.



### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Developing citizenship

Objective: to explore the contributions made by different groups to the community

Class: third to sixth classes

#### Stage 1

Divide the children into groups of five and give them three cards with *agree*, *disagree* and *don't know* on them. Then either read the following statements or present them to each of the groups. Ask the children to think about each of the statements.

- Life is no fun when you are old.
- Old people cannot contribute much to society.
- Older people always want their own way.
- Irish society respects and cares for older people.
- Young people should be allowed to do what they like.

#### Stage 2

The children discuss each statement and indicate their opinion by holding up the card that reflects the opinion of the group. They are expected to give reasons for their opinions, especially where there is disagreement in the class.

#### Stage 3

The children can discuss the contribution made by older people to society and explore how they are treated. They should be encouraged to examine how life could be improved for older people and the role that each person can play in creating a world that is respectful towards the older generation.

# Exemplar 19

## Circle work

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Sitting in a circle formation encourages good communication and reflects the principles of sharing, equality and inclusiveness and a sense of caring for each other. Each child is given an opportunity to contribute to the discussion and is encouraged to listen to the viewpoints of others. Circle work can be used in all the strands of the SPHE programme and is appropriate at all class levels.

Circle work particularly lends itself to engaging children in critical thinking. In such a formation the teacher can participate in a dialogue with the children and can help them to explore various hypotheses and concepts through appropriate questioning. In this way children can learn to refine their ideas, to explore alternatives and to base decisions on more than emotion or a momentary whim.

Some issues that can be explored in circle work are:

- What is beauty?
- Why do you think people act in this way?
- How do we discriminate against each other?
- How did you feel when ...?

### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Developing self-confidence

Objective: to recognise one's own talents and those of others

Class: first and second classes

#### Stage 1

The children sit in a circle and are asked in turn to complete the sentence

I am good at ...

If a child cannot think of something, another child can volunteer a suggestion or the teacher can say something positive about the child.

#### Stage 2

Children can volunteer their opinions on any other talents that may not have been mentioned.

..... is a really good friend.

..... is good at remembering soccer scores.

#### Stage 3

All the children's names are put into a hat, and as a name is chosen that child should describe himself/herself, using positive statements. Other children can also contribute to the descriptions, making sure that no negative or hurtful remarks are made.

#### Stage 4

Each child can return to his/her desk and write five positive things about himself/herself. This written work can then be brought home and explored with a parent or guardian.

# Exemplar 20

## Creating a collage

Collages or posters can be used to represent ideas and concepts. They develop creative expression and help children to appreciate the different ways in which messages can be communicated.

### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Self-identity

Objective: to recognise, describe and discuss individual personality traits, qualities, strengths and limitations

Class: infants to second class

#### Stage 1

Each child is asked to prepare a self-portrait using pictures from magazines, pieces of fabric, a line from song, a symbol or a colour. They are given time to complete this activity on their own.

#### Stage 2

On completion of the pictures the children are asked to discuss their portrait with a partner. They are encouraged to talk about the reasons particular items were chosen and why the picture was put together in a particular way.

#### Stage 3

When all the portraits are displayed in the classroom the children engage in a general discussion with the class teacher on the process and what it meant to them. They could note the following:

- what they learned about themselves in the exercise
- the difficulty or simplicity of the activity
- the common features and those that were different
- the accuracy of the portrayal according to the other children.



'Me'



'My name is Averley'



'This is me'

# Exemplar 21

## Exploring a poem

Using poetry with children enables them to explore what is not known and can deepen what is known.

### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Relating to others

Objective: to explore conflict in friendship

Class: third to sixth classes

#### Stage 1

Read the following poem aloud to the children:

*I Thought a Lot of You  
I thought you were my friend  
I thought you said you'd help*

*I thought I could trust you  
I thought I could count on you*

*I thought you were loyal  
I thought you would understand  
I thought I made it sound straightforward  
I thought I had someone to talk to  
I thought you had an answer*

*I thought you were a good listener  
I thought I was telling in confidence*

*I thought I wasn't being stupid  
I thought you wouldn't make a fool of me  
I thought you weren't going to tell a soul  
I thought wrong!*

P. S. Blackman (Jnr) from *Good Grief* by Barbara Ward and Associates

#### Stage 2

In small groups, the children discuss the incident that may have caused the poem to be written and identify the people involved, the age group of the author, and the feelings of the those involved. They can then share their ideas and suggestions with the class.

#### Stage 3

Individual children are asked to read some lines from the poem, for example

*I thought you were loyal*

*I thought you would understand.*

The child is asked to share his/her thoughts on these particular lines. Other children can add to the suggestions put forward. The teacher can help to elicit ideas from the children by asking appropriate questions, such as:

In what ways was the person loyal to you before?

How had the person been understanding?

Why are you so surprised?

Did the person ever do anything like this before?

What do you think you will do now?

#### Stage 4

The children can develop a drama based on the situation that caused the poem to be written. (Refer to techniques and approaches recommended in the drama guidelines.)

#### Extension work

- Design a set of questions that the child could ask the writer.



# Written activities

There are many opportunities to use written activities for exploring particular issues and aspects of the content. Surveys, check-lists, worksheets and questionnaires are all useful ways of provoking children's thinking, of helping them to gain new insights, and of examining topics in some depth.

The use of polls and surveys is commonplace in the media, and children can learn to be more critical of some of these approaches as they use them in their own activities. Drawing up lists and creating and answering questionnaires will allow children to gather and record information and learn to compare and contrast findings and conclusions. Projects can encourage children to explore and research a topic in detail, to question popular ideas, and to develop opinions and ideas of their own.

Information gathered can form the basis of further exploration or research and encourage the children to think about an issue in a real and meaningful manner. It is essential that any written activities undertaken are discussed, findings explored, and reasons given for particular conclusions.

The children can collate and present their findings using one of the page make-up programs that are available. This will make it easier for them to analyse their data and to draw conclusions from their findings. They can develop their computer skills and learn how to present their work in an appealing and interesting manner as they draw up questions for surveys, carry out a project or create a check-list.

These experiences will also help them to become familiar with the ways in which presentation techniques can be used to distort information and to present a particular point of view.

The exemplars on the following pages illustrate some activities that require children to write or record their findings. They include

- surveys
- questionnaires
- lists and check-lists
- projects
- worksheets.

# Exemplar 22

## Surveys

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Surveys can be carried out in all classes and by individual children or in groups. They are useful for gathering information on many topics, for example favourite foods, particular attitudes, safety measures, number and frequency of illegible road signs, favourite hygiene products or programmes on television.

A survey will usually require a child or children to ask questions of others and to record the findings. In this way involvement in surveying can help children to develop a range of social skills, including listening and acting in a courteous and mannerly fashion. Such work will also require children to take responsibility for their own work and be prepared to present their findings to the class.

In carrying out a survey children can use previously drafted questions or can draw up their own list of questions. As they experiment with surveys they will learn the importance of the type of question that is asked and before leaving primary school may have begun to explore how particular questions can influence the type of responses given.

Once children have gathered the information they learn to record the findings in different ways, and as they explore the findings they learn to interpret the data or use it as a basis for further research. (This will link in with the strand unit 'Representing and interpreting data' in the mathematics curriculum.)

In the junior classes children can carry out surveys based on topics such as favourite food or magazines, the most common kitchen utensils used at home, or the types of games most frequently played in the school yard. As children progress through the school many issues can be explored using a survey or questionnaire as a starting point. These could include reviewing attitudes to sex roles or to various ethnic groups, polling people on the most appropriate way of dealing with a local environmental or civic issue, or gathering information on the amount of time spent watching television or playing computer games.

On occasion children may carry out a survey among different groups, such as parents, children in an infant classroom, or those in a senior classroom. The results of such a survey can make for very useful and interesting comparisons and explorations.

Strand unit: Developing citizenship

Objective: to explore the concept of moving home as an introduction to understanding immigration

Class: fifth and sixth classes

Moving home is a common human experience shared by all of us. It can easily be used to promote a discussion on immigration or the arrival of people of different cultures to our shores. A survey on moving is a tangible way of stressing the normality of the experience and its frequency in the society in which we live today.

### Stage 1

The children prepare some questions that could be used in surveying parents and other members of families about times they have moved home. The questions should relate to

- how long they have lived in an area
- where they moved from and the reasons why they moved
- attitudes to moving
- reactions from local people when they moved into a new area.

Once the children have prepared the questionnaire they can individually question their families, grandparents, or immediate neighbours or friends.

### Stage 2

The children bring their findings into school, and as they work in pairs they can collate the results. Information can be presented in the form of pictograms, tick charts and pie charts and so provide statistics for the class to examine and explore. The results will indicate, for example, how many children had moved home; how many had moved more than



A child drawing a picture of his home.

once; how many had come from another county or country; and the types of attitudes that prevailed.

### Stage 3

Engage the children in a class discussion on the results. Focus the discussion on

- reasons why people sometimes have to move home
- the difficulties associated with moving
- how people might be treated when they move into a new area
- the reasons for immigration and settlement
- how immigrants are treated and some of their feelings when they arrive in a different country.

Encourage children to explore their own attitudes to some of the different people who live in their area or are depicted on television. (Include a reference in the discussion to those who are homeless. Stories of particular cases can be read to children.)

### Stage 4

The children might carry out some further research on the various nationalities that live in the locality or that have immigrated to Ireland in recent times. Equally they might determine how many people from their own locality emigrated to England or the United States over the past thirty years, or they might gather stories from their families regarding relatives who now live abroad.

### Stage 5

The children might write a story or a poem reflecting the feelings of someone who had to leave their homeland because of difficult circumstances.

# Exemplar 23

## Questionnaires

Questionnaires are an effective means of exploring particular topics. Children can complete pre-designed questionnaires or create their own. Questionnaires are a common feature of everyday life and it is important for children to become familiar with the format, the way in which questions are phrased and to explore the effectiveness of such a data-collecting exercise.

In using questionnaires children can learn about different types of questions and can develop a questioning attitude.

### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Media education,  
Making decisions

Objective: to evaluate the  
internet as it is used in the  
classroom

Class: fifth and sixth classes

#### Stage 1

The teacher outlines to the children the history of the internet and what it purports to do. He/she can elicit from them their knowledge of this system of communication and any experiences they have had of using the network.

- The internet is a collection of computers (a network) linked together by phone lines that allow for global sharing of information.
- It is by far the fastest-growing area of technology.
- The two most widely used elements are e-mail and the worldwide web.

Some of the children could recount how it is used. They can then examine possible uses of the internet and the advantages and disadvantages of such a form of communication. (In order to explore and examine the internet and e-mail in any detail it is essential that the children have some first-hand experience of both.)

#### Stage 2

Give a questionnaire to each group of three children in the class and ask them to complete the form based on the page they have found on the internet. Some sample questions that could appear on a questionnaire are:

#### Sample questionnaire

##### The internet system

- 1 How are you linked to the internet? computer and modem? direct connection at school?
- 2 What web browser are you using?
- 3 What is the URL of the web page you are looking at?
- 4 What is the name of the site?

##### Looking at a page

- 1 Does the page take a long time to load?
- 2 Are there big pictures on the page?
- 3 Is the spelling correct on the page?

- 4 Are the author's e-mail address and name on the page?
- 5 If you go to another page is there a route back to the first page?
- 6 Is there a date that tells you when the page was made?

##### What did you learn?

- 1 Does the title of the page tell you what it is about?
- 2 Are the facts on the page what you were looking for?
- 3 Would you have found more information in an encyclopaedia?

### Stage 3

On completing the questionnaire, the children share their findings with other groups and explore the similarities and differences in the answers.

The children can explore the possibility of being diverted while on route, as other pages look interesting. Ask them how they could deal with this and the various advantages and disadvantages of 'surfing the net'. The discussion should focus on the need to have a clear objective in viewing web pages and the importance of the individual having control of the medium in use.

Ask the children to think of ways in which they themselves could use the worldwide web and whether they like it as a source of exploration and communication.

### Extension Work

An extension to this work could be an examination of e-mail, where children can create their own letters or messages and send them to other children at their e-mail addresses.

# Exemplar 24

## Lists and check-lists

Using a check-list gives children the opportunity to note all the items on the list that contain particular elements. It can guide them in their explorations and help them to be more observant or conscious of detail. A check-list can be used as a starting point for a lesson to create an awareness of an issue: for example, the children can note specific aspects of particular television programmes as an introduction to exploring television. A check-list or list could equally be used as a conclusion to an activity where the children, having explored the issue of safety in the home, could for example, create a list or check-list of all the items that must be checked in a house before a family goes on holiday.

Other examples of using a check-list or list in SPHE include

- exploring the topic of substance misuse. The children could begin by creating a list of all the items that go into or onto their bodies. They can then distinguish between those that are harmful and those that are not. Creating a list in this manner can create an awareness in children of all the things we put into or onto our bodies and increase their understanding of the importance of the effects of the various substances on health and well-being.
- creating a check-list of all the things that children should look for on the way to and from school that illustrate safety for travelling, for example traffic lights, stop signs, pedestrian lights or zebra crossings, traffic cones on the road, yield signs, or 'animals crossing' signs.

### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Developing self-confidence, Developing citizenship

Objective: to learn how to make complaints and seek redress; to learn about citizens' rights

Class: fifth and sixth classes

#### Stage 1

Ask the children to brainstorm the word 'Consumer'. Record their suggestions.

#### Stage 2

Give each child a blank sheet of paper. Ask them to list all the times they have been a consumer in the past week or fortnight. Examples could include buying books or magazines, cards, stationery, copybooks, sweets, cans or bottled drinks, games, stamps, bus fare, clothes, groceries, footwear.

#### Stage 3

The children can come together in small groups to compare their lists and subsequently to draw up one complete list representing the group's conclusions. Alternatively they could create one class list.

On examining the list the children can explore some of the following issues:

- Were you aware of the number of times you bought things during the past week?
- Would this be representative of every week?
- Are there some times when you would visit the shop more often?

- Do you usually go shopping by yourself?
- Are there some shops that you don't like visiting? Why?

From this discussion the teacher can explore with children the rights they have as consumers and focus on the occasional need to make complaints and to seek redress.

#### Stage 4

A number of situations may be presented to the children. For example:

- The child bought an item in the shop and on returning home found that it was faulty. What should he/she do?
- A child was not served in turn in a shop: he/she was made wait until all the adults had been seen to. What should he/she have done?

Situations such as those above or others suggested by the children could be played out in the class. Through the drama and the ensuing reflection the children can explore the various courses of action that could be taken in these situations and the type of words and language that would be most helpful to the child.

# Exemplar 25

## Projects

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Projects can be used effectively with all classes in the school. At the senior level, children could explore particular issues such as

- food: origins, dietary habits of different groups, food-related illnesses, countries of origin of various foods, market prices
- drugs: sources, effects
- fashion: popular items, changes in fashion through the years, peer pressure, influences on fashion
- media: types of media, uses of media, favourite forms of media, changes in recent years.

Younger children will also enjoy exploring the above topics in an age-appropriate manner. Some other topics that may be appropriate for this age group are:

- safety at home
- where I live
- shopping.

The emphasis in carrying out a project with any age group is on children finding and collating information of different kinds. This could include attitudes of various groups, hearsay, statistics, and recorded extracts from interviews on television or radio programmes. The children must present their findings to others and be able to answer questions on their methods of research, their sources and the salient features of their findings. Where a topic is very detailed, various groups in the class could focus on different aspects of the same topic or could present the same information in a variety of ways.

Projects are a very useful way of integrating a topic throughout a number of subject areas. An exploration of an issue may include a historical aspect, an investigation, some statistics, or language development. The focus in an SPHE project will be on using the findings from various disciplines to draw some conclusions that could influence the decisions the child will make both now and in the future.

There are five main stages in carrying out a project: (1) discussing and exploring the topic, (2) delegating areas of responsibility, (3) creating a timetable for completion, (4) exploring sources and forms of presentation, and (5) presenting the project. During the lifetime of a project (a week or a fortnight) the children are given regular opportunities to discuss progress, to clarify issues, and to seek help.

Displaying the project for some time before the final presentations can ensure that questions are prepared and that other class members are familiar with the details of the various projects.

The following examples illustrate projects suitable for both junior and senior classes. The first example is a project based on the local school, and the second involves the class in creating a newsletter.

Strand unit: Developing citizenship

Objective: to explore the various ways in which the school promotes a sense of belonging

Class: first to sixth classes

### Stage 1

Initial exploration of the topic 'Our school'. Together with the children the teacher explores various aspects of the topic and delegates an aspect to each group in the class. These may include

- the school building
- the people attending the school and their families
- stories they have heard about the school
- achievements in the school
- famous people who have visited the school
- friends of the school.

### Stage 2

Individual and group responsibilities are given, and a timetable for the first phase to be completed is decided. Children are given time in class to begin putting their ideas together.

### Stage 3

The children report on progress and make the final adjustments and additions to their project. They are encouraged to present their conclusions in a variety of ways.

### Stage 4

The authors of the project are questioned on their presentation. This can indicate to the teacher the level of understanding the children have of what they have researched and what they have learned from the process. The teacher can also ask questions and encourage the presenters to expand on some of the aspects of their project.

### Stage 5

The authors of the project outline what they learned from the experience, including what they learned from the findings, from the process, and from working together. They might also indicate other areas that could be covered and difficulties they encountered and make recommendations for future projects.

Strand unit: Media education

Objective: to create a class newsletter

Class: third to sixth classes

#### Stage 1

Discuss with the children the challenge of creating a class or school newsletter.

Encourage them to gather appropriate information, pictures, stories and news items that could be included and identify the target readership.

#### Stage 2

Elicit from children the items that should be included in the newsletter, for example pictures, stories, interviews, crosswords, sports, school or class achievements. Divide the class into groups of three or four and give each group responsibility for a particular section of the newsletter.

#### Stage 3

Each group is asked to think of a title and logo for the newsletter. The children can vote for their favourite title or logo and subsequently decide on its position and colour.

#### Stage 4

Each group presents its material to the class. An editorial team is chosen, and this group is responsible for putting the final newsletter together. This will include assigning people to cut and paste and to design the final draft. Children should be encouraged to create their newsletter on the computer using an appropriate word-processing or publishing program.

#### Stage 5

The class could present their newsletter to the school or elect a PR committee to take charge of the distribution. The class could choose a charity that would benefit from the sale of the newsletter.

#### Extension work

The children could visit the offices of a local newspaper or invite local reporters to come and speak to the class. Equally they could explore in some detail the work of the different people who contribute to the newspaper.

They could also explore the type of advertising used in newspapers and magazines and the cost of this.

# Exemplar 26

## Worksheets

Worksheets may be used in a variety of ways and with all age groups and ranges of ability in the school. Worksheets are a helpful means of informing parents about issues covered in school as they can see at first hand the type of material being covered in school and can further explore the topic with their children at home.

The following are some examples of using worksheets:

- Children could answer a list of relevant questions to consolidate information given in a lesson on drugs and their various effects.
- Having read a story to the children, the teacher gives them a worksheet consisting of a series of questions. The questions will range from those based on the content to questions requiring the children to reach conclusions, make inferences, or give personal opinions.
- Having discussed a particular issue, the children might be presented with a worksheet containing two columns, one headed *do* and the other headed *don't*. The children can then identify a number of the *do's* and *don't's* associated with the topic.
- Labels can be matched to illustrations of particular professions or nationalities. On examining the completed worksheets the children could explore the issue of stereotyping and incorrect labelling.

### Sample lesson plan

Strand unit: Self-identity

Objective: to become aware of oneself and the immediate world through using the senses

Class: junior and senior infants



Sample A4 worksheet

#### Stage 1

Elicit from the children five or six things that they saw, heard, tasted, touched or smelled before coming to school that morning. Discuss the particular senses used, ensuring that children understand the meaning of the word 'sense'.

Alternatively, the teacher could involve the children in playing a game using one of the senses, for example Chinese Whispers, or identifying an object by feeling it while wearing a blindfold.

Elicit examples from the children of information about themselves or the world that is received through using the senses. For example, Christmas trees have a lovely smell, feel prickly and are shaped like a triangle.

#### Stage 2

Give each child in the class a copy of the worksheet shown on this page.

#### Stage 3

The children discuss with the rest of the class the pictures they included on the worksheet. The teacher might subsequently question them on their inclusions, for example by encouraging them to think of examples that could be applied to a number of the senses.

#### Stage 4

The children think of their favourite smell, touch, taste, sight or sound and then illustrate it or relay it to the class. They might also explore things or people they associate with particular tastes, sights, sounds, etc.

# The media and information and communication technologies

Children live in an information society, and it is essential that they are given opportunities in SPHE to

- access and retrieve information
- explore some techniques used in the media and the various technologies for communication available to them
- learn to make decisions and become more discerning in their use of the technology and the media
- develop self-confidence in using a wide range of technology
- enhance their relationship skills as they discover new ways of communicating and explore and learn together.

A number of CD-ROMs are available covering issues such as life-cycles, diet analysis, growing up together, the human body and the processes of conception, pregnancy and birth and diet analysis. These issues are all presented in interesting ways, and with the help of task-cards, can help children of all ages to understand these aspects of the programme.

Word-processing programs and publishing programs give children the opportunity to draft, edit and correct their own work. This enables them to communicate their ideas, findings or suggestions in an interesting and original way. Children can work very effectively in pairs or small groups on such tasks, and in sharing ideas and investigating together they can learn from and with one another.

The content of many television and radio programmes, advertisements and videos can be beneficial in exploring particular topics and issues in SPHE. These include relationships, growing and changing, resolving conflict, body image, safety and dealing with difference. Recording extracts from programmes and discussing and analysing them in the classroom can help children to understand the techniques being used to promote products or lifestyles, to appreciate the difference between fact and fiction, and become aware of the meaning of a target audience.

The internet can provide children with a wide range of source material on many topics. It is important that the internet is introduced to children in a gradual and structured way and that they are made aware of its influence and the culture, values and attitudes that it promotes. Through using the internet children will recognise the need to make immediate decisions and choices. SPHE provides the opportunity to promote the skills for using the internet appropriately and for enabling the child to become a discerning and judicious internet user.

# Looking at children's work

## Children's work

The teaching approaches described in these guidelines may be used by teachers to provide a range of learning experiences for their pupils. Children's participation in the various activities, both formal and informal, provides a flow of information about their progress in the SPHE curriculum.

This information is crucial to the teacher's professional judgement about how successfully pupils are learning and in enabling him/her to help children to learn more effectively. A number of techniques will be used in collecting and recording information about pupils' progress in SPHE. Each has its contribution to make in assisting the teacher in assessing progress, identifying strengths and difficulties, communicating to the pupil, parents, and others and in planning further learning experiences for the child.

## Teacher observation

Teacher observation is one of the most important tools of assessment in SPHE. Aspects of children's learning that teachers notice while SPHE topics and issues are explored and taught provide both immediate and essential information about each child's learning. Informal observations may be made as children undertake tasks or explorations, engage in a range of interactive and individual assignments, interact with the teacher, and take part in discussions. Observations can be valuable in helping the teacher to assess the extent to which

children have developed particular attitudes and skills and the extent to which they have learned to engage in self-assessment and in setting their own goals and targets.

Some of the details of children's learning that emerge may do so in an incidental manner, while on other occasions teachers may decide to look for particular learning outcomes.

As the teacher observes the children in their everyday interactions and conversations in the class, he/she can take note of the ways in which they can work with others, the types of questions asked, and the level of interest and self-confidence displayed. The teacher can also recognise the children who are able to seek help and those who have or have not developed the necessary coping skills for dealing with difficulties and change. In observing children interacting with each other, both inside and outside the classroom, the teacher can discover those children who are able to relate effectively to others and those who may need help in developing social skills and abilities.

As children work together on a particular activity the teacher can observe their level of interest in the topic, the way in which they apply themselves to the work in hand, and their understanding of the aspects involved.

It will be helpful for the teacher to keep some notes on his/her informal observations of the children as they

work and interact. These notes should be succinct and will be useful for the teacher when planning for the future, and in communicating with the child, with parents and with other teachers.

### Teacher-designed tasks and tests

There is a particular emphasis in SPHE on presenting children with opportunities to actively engage in their own learning. Through a variety of structured activities children can explore many issues and topics relevant to the social, personal and health dimensions of their lives. Such activities promote dialogue, questioning, reflection and action. Using a variety of techniques, the children can internalise what they have learned and can transfer the learning to different aspects of their own lives.

In designing tasks and tests that mirror the recommended teaching and learning strategies, the teacher can assess the progress of the child in various aspects of the SPHE programme. Any task used should also reflect the variety of intelligences in the class and not be continually confined to one type of approach. For example, where the class have learned to read a photograph or a television programme, the teacher could present the children with a photograph or video extract and ask them to deconstruct the image and talk about their conclusions. Using this kind of task, the teacher will discover the extent to which the process was

understood and through further questioning can elicit details from the child about what he/she has learned.

Similarly, the children may have explored ways of resolving conflict. When presented with a number of scenarios where conflict is evident, the children can display their understanding of the strategies and the ways in which they can be applied in each of the situations. The task could require the children to engage in a drama activity or to present their conclusions orally.

On occasion it will be helpful to design a task that could be used to ascertain the child's knowledge and understanding of a topic. For example, in the senior classes children learn about the concept of democracy and the role of the President, elections and the Constitution. Having discussed and explored these issues in some detail, the teacher could devise a worksheet that could help determine the knowledge the children have gleaned. This can be supplemented or replaced by a task where the children can improvise an election or write a poem on 'A day in the life of a President'. All these types of activities will help the teacher to assess the nature of the understanding acquired by the child.

In the junior classes children learn about ways of keeping safe. Subsequent to the exploration of this unit the teacher could design some activities that would allow the children to illustrate their knowledge of safety and the strategies learned. These tasks could include a series of open-ended statements to be completed, a range of pictorial options from which to choose, or a role-play to be demonstrated.

Other options include children carrying out surveys or interviews or gathering items that represent a particular concept. The list of possible tasks is endless and when used judiciously can be very informative for the teacher when planning further activities in SPHE.

### Portfolios and projects

Many samples of work will emerge from the activities carried out by the children. Where these are gathered in a portfolio compiled by the child they become a useful source for assessing children's understanding and skills. Portfolios can range from a simple folder or wallet to a scrapbook or file.

Throughout a year there will be many examples of work carried out by the children, and while all these may be kept by the individual child in a personal portfolio, a selected sample can be chosen for inclusion in the portfolio that will ultimately be assessed by the teacher. The sample chosen, either by the child or by the teacher, should represent a variety of work indicating the child's progress in and experience of various strands of the curriculum.

Samples should have attached the date of the activity and an indication of the help, if any, that was given to the child in completing the task. This collection will allow the teacher to make a professional informed judgement about the child's progress and his/her readiness for further learning experiences. Samples can be used as a basis for displays at the end of a term or a school year and can inform the assessment that is recorded on the pupil profile card.

Projects that are carried out in the class by an individual or groups of children are also a useful means of assessing children's understanding and their skill and attitudinal development on a particular topic. The teacher can note the information gathered, the methods of research used, the way the children worked together, the styles of presentation, and the facility with which children answered questions related to their project.

Both portfolios and projects have a role to play in providing the teacher with information to communicate to parents about the child's progress. They are also helpful in ascertaining children's ability to set individual or group goals and targets and the ways in which these were or were not achieved. They may also contribute to the teacher's planning, indicating certain difficulties, the limitations and strengths of particular approaches, or the content that is well covered and that which may need further consolidation and exploration.

# *Exploring newspapers*



Section 6

# Appendix

# Some useful sources for SPHE

Child Abuse Prevention Programme,  
Cherry Orchard Hospital, Clondalkin,  
Dublin 10.

Dental Health Foundation, Richview,  
Clonskeagh Road, Dublin 4.

Education centres  
*see listing in telephone directory*

Health and Safety Authority,  
Hogan Place, Dublin 2.

Health Promoting Schools Network,  
Marino Institute of Education,  
Griffith Avenue, Dublin

Health-Promotion Unit,  
Department of Health and Children,  
Hawkins House,  
Dublin 1.

National Children's Resource Centre,  
Christ Church Square,  
Dublin 8.

National Parents' Council—Primary  
16/20 Cumberland Street South,  
Dublin 2.

Regional Health Authorities  
*see listing in telephone directory*

RSE Support Service,  
St Patrick's College of Education,  
Drumcondra,  
Dublin 9.

Pavee Point Traveller Centre,  
46, North Great Charles St.  
Dublin 1

Substance Misuse Prevention Project,  
Primary,  
West Dublin Teacher Centre,  
Monastery Road,  
Clondalkin,  
Dublin 22.

# Sample criteria for choosing resources

Is the resource in question

- in accordance with school policies?
- in line with the principles of the SPHE curriculum?
- sufficiently flexible to take into account the children's present knowledge and to allow the teacher to link this with the new learning?
- appealing to children and to the teacher?
- up to date?
- accompanied by clear instructions on how it could be used effectively in the class?
- free of bias?
- produced by a reputable agency?
- devoid of racial or sexual stereotyping?
- in keeping with the aims and objectives of the class programme in SPHE?
- reflective of active methods of learning?
- well-designed and durable?

# Selected source references for the curriculum and guidelines

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# Glossary

co-operative learning	that form of group learning that has as its characteristics mixed-ability groupings, positive interdependence, common group goals, carefully structured groups, individual accountability and shared leadership
ethnic group	a group within a larger population distinguished by traits such as common geographical origins, language, culture or religious traditions
health	a resource for everyday life, not an objective of living It is a positive concept emphasising social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities
interpersonal	relates to one's relations with others where one can perceive and make distinctions in the moods, intentions, motivations and feelings of other people
intrapersonal	refers to the awareness of self and to self-knowledge and understanding. It is about the person being aware of his/her inner moods, intentions, motivations, temperaments and desires
quiet time	any time when the child can be quiet in himself/herself and engage in activities without interruption
self-acceptance	the congruence between a person's self-concept and his/her ideal self
self-awareness	a consciousness of self as a distinct individual. This is developed through social feeling, empathic listening, honesty and an understanding of how defence mechanisms are used
self-concept	the particular cluster of ideas or attitudes that we have about ourselves at any time
self-esteem	the degree to which people feel worthy, capable, significant and effective

# Membership of the Curriculum Committee for SPHE

These guidelines have been prepared under the direction of the Curriculum Committee for SPHE established by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

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