

Prayer Spaces & SPHE



What SPHE in Irish Schools like?

Social, Physical and Health Education (SPHE) is a statutory element of the Irish Curriculum's from Junior Infants through to sixth class. **SPHE fosters the personal development and health and wellbeing of the child.** It helps him/her to create and maintain supportive relationships and to **become an active and responsible citizen in society and permeates through all school life.**

A strong focus on SPHE within school can help to build pupils' resilience to deal with challenges. It places the child at the centre of the curriculum and through engagement in a broad range of **caught and taught activities** seeks to equip and prepare young people for life, work and the challenges of being an adult in an increasingly complex society.

SPHE focuses on 3 key themes; Myself, Myself and Others, Myself and the World which concentrate on the development of children's knowledge, attitudes, skills, relationships, emotional awareness, thinking skills, values, life skills and behaviour that flows both in and outside of the classroom.

SPHE is most effective where is it **integrated throughout school life and where the responsibility is shared by 'partners in education' - parents, staff, children, health professionals, external agencies and wider communities.** Because of this the delivery of SPHE will vary between schools so the best way to find out about your local's schools approach is to **meet up with the Head Teacher or Senior Member of Staff and discuss it**, exploring ways in which a prayer space could enrich what is being taught. This reflects an essential aspect of hosting a prayer space in a school – the **importance of building a positive relationship with the school and its staff**, and so connecting the Christian community with the school community to develop trust and mutual understanding.

Enriching SPHE with Prayer Spaces in Schools

Here are just a few examples of why SPHE is important (from the NCCA Guidance for SPHE) and how Prayer Spaces in Schools connect with SPHE:



SPHE	Prayer Spaces in Schools
Self Identity: Explore and express a sense of self , for example, temperament, feelings and emotions, personal responsibility, personal needs, aspirations etc.	Prayer Spaces provide a place for pupils to reflect on their emotional health. Through various activities they can explore their feelings, emotions and dreams for the future, and how reflect on how it impacts their mental health in a safe environment.
Spiritual development: Examine and explore concepts and ideas and to formulate questions. To develop a sense of awe and mystery and formulate own beliefs.	Prayer Spaces create space in the school life for pupils to explore their own beliefs and how their values inform how they relate to others and the world around them. They create opportunity to experience alternative values and beliefs, and create space for them to decide how to interact with those things.
Relationships: Develop coping strategies to deal with challenging relationship scenarios , for example, sibling rivalry, caring for relatives, domestic violence, teenage rebellion, child abuse, sexism, change in family circumstances, coping with rejection, loneliness and loss, etc.	Prayer Spaces by their nature help pupils with mindfulness. Activities allow pupils to process relationships and the effect they have on their lives across each age group. These activities themselves can be coping strategies of how to process the emotions that come up when interacting with others.
Resolving Conflict: Develop strategies to avoid and resolve conflict , for example, active listening, assertiveness, negotiation, mediation etc.	Prayer Spaces are pastoral places that allow pupils time and space to begin to process their feelings, and pay attention to their emotions. This in tern can hep them come up with resolutions for moving forward whilst equipping them with skills of meditation ad mindfulness.
Developing Citizen: Encouraged to become an active and responsible citizen who understands the interdependent nature of the world in which he/she lives.	Prayer Spaces develop a sense of shared purpose through a variety of activities that allow pupils to reflect on themselves, their relationships, their aspirations, their community and the world. They are a space of reflection and of slowing down which allow pupils time too critically engage with thinking about these things which equips them to engage in their community and wider world.