



Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed



Visiting Speaker and Guest Policy

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MISSION STATEMENT

School Mission statement: At Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed we aspire to develop a caring and inclusive learning community that encourages the potential of each person. The mission is realised through our core values of Academic Excellence, Respect, Care, Community and Equality.

Rath as Saothar – Success through effort.

Rationale

This policy is to provide guidelines for all visitors to the school and in doing so, provide a safe and secure environment for our students and staff. This policy also establishes protocols and procedures that effectively monitor and manage visitors without compromising the open and inviting nature of the school. This policy has been devised with Circular No. 0043/2018 and 0023/2010 in mind. This policy is underpinned by our core values of respect, care, equality, community and academic excellence.

Definitions

Visitors to the school are defined as all people other than staff members and students.

Types of Visitors

Our school has a variety of regular, planned, and unplanned visitors to the school. Such visitors may include:

1. Parents
2. Department of Education officials
3. Guest speakers
4. Paid coaches and instructors
5. Contractors/owners and employees of other businesses
6. Any other persons who arrive on the school premises (other than students and staff members). This list is not exhaustive.

The school principal shall have the authority to determine which visits are permitted as well as the discretion to set any appropriate conditions on the nature and extent of such visits. In exercising this discretion, the principal shall consider the purpose of the visit, the impact of the visitor's presence and the relationship of any visitor to the students. School personnel shall seek to assure that parents and other visitors are courteously received and that sincere efforts are made to provide them with the information as may be needed to foster a cooperative relationship between home, school and community.

General Requirements for Visitors

1. All visitors shall report to the school office and sign the visitor book (using the Compass kiosk) when arriving or leaving the school premises.
2. All visitors (except parents/guardians and those briefly visiting the school as is the case with deliveries and enquiries) shall be requested to wear an appropriate form of identification when on school premises.
3. Whenever possible, visitors should obtain authorisation from the principal in advance. At the discretion of the principal, such prior authorisation may be required.
4. All school visitors must comply at all times with Board of Management and Department of Education policies, administrative rules and school regulations, including Circular 0023/2010 and 0043/2018. This circular deals specifically with visitors in relation to Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and Wellbeing. (Appendix 1 & 2).
5. Visitors should be familiar with this policy. The organising teacher can direct visitors to the school website to access this policy.

Parents as Visitors

- Parents wishing to conference with teachers or administrators are required to make arrangements in advance. Parents must direct queries toward their child's year head in the first instance. Parents can contact the school office to make an appointment.
- Parents who visit the premises during the school day to collect students for external appointments are required to report to the school office and sign their child out and also back in if the student returns to school before the end of the school day.

Guest Speakers

- Guest speakers may be invited to the school when approved by the Principal and the Board of Management and where it has been deemed that the use of such a speaker will bring specific knowledge and expertise to enrich the planned curriculum.
- If the visitor is involved in wellbeing/wellbeing promotion the student support team must be presented with the Appendix of Circular No. 0043/2018 entitled Checklist: Use of Programmes and/or External Facilitators and the team must be satisfied that all requirements are met.
- It is the responsibility of the organising teacher to ensure that the speaker has valid Garda Vetting.
- Guest speakers should be accompanied by a member of staff at all times during their visit unless alternative arrangements have been authorised by management.

- A checklist for the organisation of guest speakers is appended to this document. (Appendix 3).
- Please also see General Requirements for Visitors above.

Paid/Volunteer Coaches and Instructors

- Please see the CMCO sports policy for full information on this.

Contractors/owners and employees of other businesses

Contractors and businesses who may regularly have staff on the premises during the school day will be required to provide Garda clearance reports for same. Contractors/businesses who may occasionally visit the premises during the school day must be accompanied by a member of staff at all times.

Special Situations

Parents are requested to make the school aware of visiting rights of parent(s) should any special conditions prevail. Documentary evidence may be required.

School Management has the authority to exclude from the school premises any person who disrupts or who appears likely to become a disruption to the educational program. Any such individual shall be directed to leave the school premises immediately and law enforcement authorities shall be called if necessary.

School Policies

Other school policies may be particularly relevant to this policy. Please see our Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy. Visit our website to view school policies www.cmco.ie.

Ratification

The Board of Management adopted this policy at a meeting on **7 February 2024** and the policy is available on the school website.

Review and Development

We are committed to the review and development of our school policies. As part of our ongoing review process, this policy will be examined to reflect feedback from our evaluation practices and also to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices.

Appendix 1

Circular 0023/2010

To Chairpersons of Boards of Management and Principals of all Post-Primary Schools

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) & Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Best Practice Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education and Science wishes to advise management authorities of the necessity to adhere to best practice guidelines in the mandatory implementation of SPHE/RSE in the junior cycle and RSE in the senior cycle.

National and international research has consistently shown that the qualified classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and that s/he can have a powerful impact on influencing students' attitudes, values and behaviour in all aspects of health education.

The SPHE/RSE programme should have a substantial skills development element and should not merely be information based. Such skills are developed over time and founded on an ongoing relationship based on trust, understanding and mutual respect.

Young people flourish in an environment where there is a whole-school approach to the holistic growth of students and where there is a shared belief in their potential for development, learning and wellbeing.

RESPONSIBILITY OF SCHOOLS

The Education Act (1998) states that:

A recognised school shall promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.

School management, principals and teachers have a duty to provide the best quality and most appropriate social, personal and health education for their students. They also have a duty to protect students in their care at all times from any potentially harmful, inappropriate or misguided resources, interventions or programmes.

VISITORS TO POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS: GUIDELINES

If schools wish to enhance or supplement SPHE/RSE by inviting visitors to the classroom precise criteria must apply. Outside facilitators who contribute to the SPHE/RSE programme can play a valuable role in supplementing, complementing and supporting a planned, comprehensive and established SPHE/RSE programme. Any such visitor or visiting group should adhere to the guidelines of good practice as set out in the SPHE Handbook Section 7 and which are condensed herewith:

- Visitors to the classroom or school, particularly those engaging directly with students, should be aware of relevant school policies including the school's child protection policy, RSE policy and substance misuse policy. Any such visit must be carefully planned in advance in line with the relevant whole-school SPHE/RSE programme(s) and policies.
- Talks/programmes delivered by outside agencies or speakers must be consistent with and complementary to the school's ethos and SPHE/RSE programme. Visits should be planned, researched and implemented in partnership with school personnel.
- Relevant teachers need to liaise with and be involved with all visitors and external agencies working with the school and the whole staff needs to be made aware of same.
- It is strongly recommended that parents should be consulted and made aware of any such visiting people or agencies to classrooms / schools.
- The school's SPHE/RSE coordinator may also help in the process of whole school planning and coordination to support the effective implementation of SPHE/RSE.
- It is of the utmost importance that classroom teachers remain in the classroom with the students and retain a central role in delivery of the core subject matter of the SPHE/RSE programme. The presence of the classroom teacher should ensure that the school follows appropriate procedures for dealing with any issue(s) that may arise as a result of the external input(s).
- All programmes and events delivered by visitors and external agencies must use appropriate, evidence-based methodologies with clear educational outcomes. Such programmes are best delivered by those specifically qualified to work with the young people for whom the programmes are designed.
- All programmes, talks, interventions and events should be evaluated by students and teachers in terms of the subject matter, messages, structure, methodology and proposed learning outcomes.

PLEASE NOTE

Research findings indicate that the following teaching approaches have limited effect and are counterproductive to the effective implementation of SPHE. In light of this, schools are advised to avoid the following approaches:

Scare tactics

Information that induces fear, and exaggerates negative consequences, is inappropriate and counterproductive.

Sensationalist interventions

Interventions that glamorise or portray risky behaviour in an exciting way are inappropriate and can encourage inappropriate risk taking.

Testimonials

Stories focused on previous dangerous lifestyles can encourage the behavior they were designed to prevent by creating heroes/heroines of individuals who give testimony.

Information only interventions

Programmes which are based on information alone are very limited in the learning outcomes they can achieve and can in fact be counter-productive in influencing values, attitudes and behaviour.

Information that is not age appropriate

Giving information to students about behaviours they are unlikely to engage in can be counterproductive in influencing values, attitudes and behaviour.

Once off/short term interventions

Short-term interventions, whether planned or in reaction to a crisis, are ineffective.

Normalising young people's risky behaviour

Giving the impression to young people, directly or indirectly, that all their peers will engage/are engaging in risky behaviours could put pressure on them to do things they would not otherwise do.

Didactic approach

Didactic approaches which are solely directive in nature are ineffective in the successful implementation of SPHE/RSE.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Information, advice and support is available from the SPHE Support Service which is a partnership between the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Health and Children, and the Health Service Executive, in association with Marino Institute of Education.

SPHE Support Service

(Post-Primary)

Marino Institute of Education

Griffith Avenue

Dublin 9.

Tel: (01) 805-7718

Fax: (01) 853-5113

Email: sphe@mie.ie

Website: www.sphe.ie

Please bring this circular to the attention of teachers and members of the school board of management.
This circular may also be accessed at www.education.ie under Education Personnel/Circulars.

Alan Wall
Principal Officer
Teacher Education Section
March 2010

Circular to Management Authorities of all Post Primary Schools: Secondary, Community and Comprehensive and the Chief Executive Officers of the Education and Training Boards

Best practice guidance for post primary schools in the use of programmes and/or external facilitators in promoting wellbeing consistent with the Department of Education and Skills' Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice

This circular supersedes [Circular 0023/2010](#)

1. Introduction

The Department of Education and Skills has developed a Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice which recognises the unique position of schools in promoting the wellbeing of students. **This policy requires that a Wellbeing Promotion Process is developed and implemented through the use of the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process, in all schools by 2023.**

School management, principals and teachers have a duty to provide the best quality and the most appropriate education in order to promote the wellbeing of their students. They also have a duty to protect students in their care at all times from any potentially harmful, inappropriate or misguided resources, interventions or programmes. The Department therefore wishes to advise management authorities of the necessity to adhere to best practice when implementing the [Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice](#).

This circular offers best practice guidance in selecting wellbeing promotion programmes and/or external facilitators (both once-off speakers and those delivering programmes over a period of time), to support the implementation of the Wellbeing Promotion Process including, in particular, the selection for social, personal and health education (SPHE), and relationships and sexuality education (RSE) curricula. The advice provided in this circular applies with effect from the date of issue.

2. Responsibility of Schools

The Education Act (1998) states that:

A recognised school shall promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.

Schools are in a unique position to promote wellbeing, and social and emotional learning, and should ensure a whole school approach to wellbeing promotion and early intervention when considering

appropriate use of external supports and services. Students flourish where there is a whole school approach to supporting their growth and where there is a shared belief in their potential for development, learning and wellbeing. Boards of management, school leaders and school staff are responsible for providing an environment that nurtures and supports students **and** play a central role in providing leadership and direction for the implementation of a comprehensive and integrated approach to wellbeing promotion.

The Department's [*Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*](#) assists schools in ensuring that wellbeing promotion is embedded within the school's existing practice. The school's review and development process using the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* provides guidance and practical resources to assist in the further enhancement of whole school approaches to wellbeing promotion in the areas of:

- culture and environment
- curriculum (teaching and learning)
- policy and planning
- relationships and partnerships

To ensure effective implementation of a whole school approach the school needs a structure such as a student support team which has wellbeing promotion as part of its responsibility.

It is essential that school managers and all staff continue to develop their competence and confidence in the promotion of wellbeing. **The qualified classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and she/he can have a powerful impact on influencing students' attitudes, values, and behaviour in all aspects of wellbeing education.** This can be achieved through accessing continuing professional development (CPD) which includes the sharing of expertise and learning and having opportunities to model and engage in collaborative working. The curricular elements of wellbeing promotion should be delivered by staff who are trained for this purpose having completed relevant CPD.

When a need is identified through the implementation of the Wellbeing Promotion Process and schools choose to select a programme or external speaker, it is important that best practice guidance as outlined in this circular is followed.

3. Supporting the School's Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process with Programmes and/or External Facilitators

Use of programmes and/or external facilitators can play a role in supplementing, complementing and supporting a planned comprehensive approach to wellbeing promotion. Programmes and/or external facilitators are most likely to be effective when they:

- are part of a whole school approach and address an identified need

- are delivered to class groups with the involvement of school staff and the appropriate involvement of parents/carers
- enhance protective factors which predispose students to positive outcomes in the face of adversity such as: facilitating supportive adult pupil relationships, strengthening life skills, helping students believe in their capacity to overcome hardship and building a sense of mastery over life circumstances
- adopt a planned implementation process, for example, incorporate needs analysis, use evidence informed programmes and track and evaluate outcomes for students
- are implemented and used in a school in a sustained way over a number of years in order to bring about lasting effects and benefits.

4. Guidance for Engaging External Facilitators

When engaging external facilitators schools are advised to consider the following best practice criteria:

- External facilitators supplement, complement or support an identified component of the school's Wellbeing Promotion Process.
- External facilitators are approved by the principal and board of management in consultation with the relevant teaching staff. All materials proposed for use by the external facilitator must also be agreed in advance by the principal and the board.

All external facilitators are compliant with the school's child protection policy and other relevant school policies and procedures.

- The school authority satisfies itself, having regard to its own legal advice if required, that it has met any vetting obligations that arise under the Vetting Act and in line with Circular 0031/2016, for such external facilitators.
- Programmes used are delivered by facilitators who are qualified to work within the specific area of content and with the students for whom the programmes are designed.
- Relevant school staff liaise with facilitators in advance of the delivery.
- **External facilitators always work under the guidance and supervision of the relevant classroom teacher who remains in the classroom with the students at all times and retains a central role in the delivery of the subject matter.** Absence of the teacher may undermine the integrity of the curriculum, and the credibility and professionalism of the teacher. It may also compromise the safety of the students.

- Relevant school staff are informed of the details of the programme being provided by external facilitators.
- Parents/carers are consulted and made aware in advance of the content of the programmes provided by external facilitators.
- External facilitators and programmes are evaluated by students and teachers with regard to the subject matter, messages communicated, methodology and proposed learning outcome.

5. Appraisal of Appropriate Use of External Facilitators

When appraising appropriate use of external facilitators, schools should consider the following best practice criteria:

Facilitators supply comprehensive information to the school about their organisation, programme content and programme methodology.

- Facilitators demonstrate an understanding of the Department's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* and appropriate educational training and qualifications.
- Facilitators demonstrate skills in facilitating and managing groups and students.
- Facilitators demonstrate an understanding of the general organisation and structure of schools.
- Facilitators show an understanding of the role of school management, school support structures, roles of support staff and other relevant support services in the event of a challenging situation arising.

6. Appraisal of Appropriate Use of Programmes

When appraising the appropriate use of programmes, schools should consider the following best practice criteria:

- The programme or input supports/complements the whole school Wellbeing Promotion Process which includes the social personal and health education, physical education and civic, social and political education curricula.
- Consideration is given to the programme's sustainability and whether the programme will bring about lasting effects or if its benefits will end on the completion of the programme.
- The programme is appropriate for the educational stage of the students, and includes evidence informed content and methodology with clear educational outcomes.

- The programme content is appropriate for the age, gender and cultural background of students.
- The programme does not focus on a single topic or use shock tactics, and does not directly or indirectly raise an unhealthy awareness of, for example, topics such as suicide*, self-harm or eating disorders.
- The programme and its outcomes have been independently evaluated and/or informed by research and evidence.
- The programme does not place an unreasonable onus on students to take an unduly high level of responsibility for the wellbeing of their peers.

*Schools can be increasingly concerned about suicide prevention and may consider offering suicide related programmes provided by external agencies or individuals. In particular, in the aftermath of a suicide tragedy, there may be an impetus to introduce suicide prevention programmes to the school. This could be at a time when the students are particularly vulnerable and may require a very different and specialised support or intervention. Such decisions should be taken in close consultation with those involved in coordinated responses from the relevant services such as the National Educational Psychological Service, the Health Service Executive's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and others in the community.

Programmes that aim to reduce suicidal behaviour among young people may have positive outcomes for some students but unintended negative consequences for others. Safety and appropriate support of all students is paramount and particular consideration should be given to:

- the potential risks of delivering the proposed programme
- any vulnerabilities that exist within the group of students
- how any programme on suicide awareness/mental health promotion ensures safety and support for the audience during and after the delivery of the programme

The checklist (Appendix) provides guidance for schools when using external programmes or engaging external facilitators to support the implementation of the school's Wellbeing Promotion Process.

7. Further information

Teachers who require information, advice, guidance and support should contact the relevant Department of Education and Skills support services in order to meet their professional development needs. The local Health Service Executive's Health Promotion personnel are also available to provide information, guidance and support.

Dalton Tattan

Assistant Secretary Department of Education and Skills July 2018

Please bring this circular to the attention of teachers and members of the school board of management.

This circular may also be accessed at www.education.ie under www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms

Appendix 3

GUEST SPEAKER CHECK LIST

This checklist will be used by staff in school to support them through the stages of involving a visitor in the classroom.

Before the visit

- Why is this visitor being asked into school?
- The facilitators have the necessary training/qualifications and expertise to deliver the agreed programme or training
 - Does the visitor come with any recommendations?
 - Has the school used this visitor before?
 - What experience has this visitor of working with this age group?
 - At least one member of the school team is available to facilitate planning, joint delivery and evaluation of the programme or external input
- Facilitators delivering the programme or input have a written child protection policy and a safeguarding statement
- Have parents been informed of the session (if appropriate)?
- The school is satisfied that it has met any vetting obligations that arise under the Vetting Act and in line with Circular 0031/2016, for the external facilitators
- The Principal and the Board of Management has approved the speaker/programme

Preparing the Visitor

- Has the visitor identified the intended learning outcomes for their input?
- Have the resources and materials been reviewed for appropriateness and the maturity of the pupils?
- Is the visitor aware of the aims of their visit?
- Has the visitor been made aware of the school ethos?
- Is the visitor aware of the ability and maturity level of the young people they will be working with?
- Will the visitor make a pre visit to the school?
- Has the visitor been made aware of the relevant school policies?
- Is the visitor aware of any risks to health and safety?

Preparing the Visit

- What arrangements will be made to welcome the visitor to the school and introduce them to the class?
- Is the size of the group appropriate to the activity and learning purpose?
- Is this visit part of a planned programme with preparation beforehand and follow up afterwards?
- How will the group be prepared for the visitor?
- What resources will be needed for the session?

During the visit

- Will the school be able to respond appropriately to questions or incidents that may arise after the visitor has left?
- How will the teacher support the visitor in this work?
- Will a member of the school staff be present during the session?

After the visit

- How will the outcome of the evaluation inform future work?
- Is there opportunity for feedback and discussion about the impact of the visitor's session?

Evaluation

The teacher and visitor may evaluate the session. The following questions can be used as prompts:

- What was the young people's response to the session(s)?
- Have the learning outcomes been achieved?
- What went particularly well in the session(s)?
- Which parts (if any) of the session were not successful?
- Were the resources and materials used appropriate?
- In what ways do you think that the session(s) could be improved?
- Are there any issues from this session that you think need addressing further?

Pupil evaluations may be carried out to inform future planning and will focus upon:

- What pupils have learnt in the sessions.
- What they like about the sessions.
- What they didn't like about the sessions.
- What else they would like to know about.

Appendix

Checklist: Use of Programmes and/or External Facilitators

<i>Engaging External Facilitators in the School:</i>		✓	×
1.	The facilitators have the necessary training/qualifications and expertise to deliver the agreed programme or training.		
2.	At least one member of the school team is available to facilitate planning, joint delivery and evaluation of the programme or external input		
3.	Facilitators are suitably qualified to work with the profile of students in the school		
4.	Facilitators delivering the programme or input have a written child protection policy and a safeguarding statement		
5.	The school is satisfied that it has met any vetting obligations that arise under the Vetting Act and in line with Circular 0031/2016, for the external facilitators		
<i>When considering a Programme:</i>		✓	×
6.	A need has been identified through the school's Wellbeing Promotion Process that could be addressed by using a specific programme		
7.	The programme is consistent with the school's whole school approach to wellbeing promotion		
8.	The Board of Management has approved the delivery of the programme		
9.	The chosen programme is informed by research and/or evidence		
10.	The programme uses evidence based/informed methodologies and promotes active learning		
11.	All relevant staff members have been informed about the proposed programme.		
12.	The programme is suitable to meet the needs of the targeted cohort of students.		
13.	In the selection of programmes, the opinions of parents/carers and students have been ascertained		
14.	An evaluation form will be completed by students and staff		
15.	The impact of the programme will be monitored		
16.	The programme delivery is sustainable over time within the school		
17.	Consideration has been given to the possible vulnerabilities of students and the minimising of any potential negative impact of the programme		
18.	Supports are available for the students during and after the programme delivery		