

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Social Personal and Health Education
(SPHE)

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | St Joseph's College |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Lucan Co Dublin |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 60263V |

Date of Inspection: 11-10-2018



SUBJECT INSPECTION

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

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| Dates of inspection | 9-10-2018 & 11-10-2018 |
| Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff |

School context

St Joseph's College is an all girl's, voluntary secondary school in Lucan which operates under the auspices of CEIST. With a current enrolment of 867 students the school offers Junior Certificate, Junior Cycle, a compulsory Transition Year (TY), established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning in the observed lessons was good to very good; the quality of assessment was satisfactory overall.
- Active and collaborative learning featured in all lessons, but there is scope to further develop the experiential learning cycle.
- Subject provision and whole-school support for SPHE are very good.
- A small core team of dedicated teachers is responsible for the delivery of SPHE.
- A very good range of whole-school initiatives is provided to support students' wellbeing and complement the delivery of SPHE and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).
- The overall quality of planning for SPHE and RSE is very good; however individual planning is often reliant on the textbook.

Recommendations

- Teachers should further develop the experiential learning cycle in lessons to provide students with opportunities to develop skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to take ownership of their decision making.
- The SPHE department should develop formative assessment strategies for the subject, including an agreed approach to setting, monitoring, assessing and reporting on student work; this should be developed in line with the whole-school assessment strategy review.
- The SPHE department should develop a bank of supplementary materials and resources that meet the needs of their own students, with less reliance on textbooks for individual planning and preparation.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good.
- Learning intentions or topics were shared in almost all lessons. Good practice was noted where these were referenced during the lesson and reviewed at the end to consolidate learning, however in most instances it was the teacher that reviewed the learning. To build on this students should be facilitated in all lessons to review and assess their own achievement of the intended learning.
- SPHE lessons took place in an atmosphere of care and respect, reflective of the whole-school emphasis on wellbeing. Classrooms were enhanced with displays of subject material, some student work, and wellbeing posters. In a few instances the classroom layout facilitated active and collaborative learning. Where space is available all teachers should consider altering classroom layout to facilitate activities that require movement.
- Lessons were overall well prepared. Teachers used some supplementary materials such as presentations and worksheets from SPHE and RSE related programmes to good effect. In most lessons the main resource used was the textbook. However, in a few instances reliance on the textbook impeded the natural flow of the lesson, for example where the outcome of discussion from the plenary session of one activity was halted to move on to the next activity in the book. Teachers should avoid over-reliance on textbooks in lessons, and use them where appropriate as an additional resource to augment rather than direct learning.
- Teachers used a range of approaches to explore topics in SPHE and RSE. Overall, approaches taken were student centred, active and collaborative. Learning in lessons generally focussed on knowledge and understanding pertinent to the topic. Commendably, in many lessons teachers also placed an emphasis on students' feelings and values.
- Student engagement and learning was best in lessons where collaborative activities were well structured and purposeful. Good practice was noted in lessons where sufficient time was given to the processing phase of activities to facilitate students to draw their own conclusions through discussion and debate, rather than the teacher presenting them with a conclusion.
- There was scope in most lessons to further develop the processing phase of the experiential learning cycle. This phase should be used to facilitate students to consider and critically evaluate issues arising out of activity-based learning, and to help students develop necessary skills, attitudes and values to empower them to take ownership of their own decision making.
- The quality of assessment was satisfactory. Some good assessment practices in lessons included effective questioning approaches, such as scaffolding to prompt students' responses and think-pair-share. Teachers provided some verbal feedback to students during lessons, and at times students completed reflection exercises in their workbooks. However, teachers do not provide written formative feedback on students' work on an ongoing basis, nor do they provide reports to parents.
- The school is currently reviewing its assessment strategy and, in line with this the SPHE department should develop its own assessment practices. This should include an agreed and consistent approach to setting, monitoring and assessing student work, providing written formative feedback, and reporting to parents on participation and progress.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good. The SPHE teachers and senior management have put considerable work into developing a rich SPHE and wellbeing programme delivered by a core team of dedicated teachers who have an interest and aptitude for the subject.
- All students have access to a single weekly period of SPHE at junior cycle. Students in first and second year have an additional personal development lesson. RSE is provided in senior cycle as a discrete module of the Religious Education programme. In TY students have two RSE periods per week on a rotation basis. This is very good provision.
- The personal development programme encompasses SPHE topics and other programmes related to health, wellbeing and Guidance. The programme is in its infancy as part of the school's provision for wellbeing and should be kept under review to ensure that it meets the evolving needs of students.
- All SPHE teachers have accessed relevant Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and the majority have accessed initial training for SPHE. Teachers should now build on current expertise by accessing up-to-date and ongoing SPHE and RSE CPD provided by the Professional Development Support Services for Teachers.
- A wide range of supplementary initiatives and activities is provided to support and enhance the SPHE programme. This includes valuable whole-school initiatives and events, such as *Wellbeing Week*, *The Skittles* programme for LGBT students, the Amber Team and *Friends for Life*. Many of these initiatives promote student leadership such as the *Cinnire* mentoring group and Wellbeing officers on the student council.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of collaborative planning for SPHE and RSE is very good. The subject plan includes detailed schemes of work that are spiral and developmental, and outlines clear links with key skills and wellbeing in junior cycle. To build on this, SPHE teachers should consistently use the included review section to ensure that the subject continues to evolve.
- Individually, teachers prepared well for lessons, however the majority relied heavily on textbooks or resources from other programmes to support learning. The subject department should now work towards supplementing this with a bank of teacher-generated resources, adapted to the needs of their own students.
- Senior management facilitates collaborative planning through provision of an annual meeting. Commendably, the subject teachers have used this time very well to review and develop subject plans and approaches to delivering SPHE and related learning. Now that a smaller core team is in place, management plans to facilitate more frequent meetings. This will be very beneficial in developing the provision for the subject.
- The position of subject co-ordinator is currently shared between two SPHE teachers who are new to the role. The team should now put plans in place to regularly rotate this role to build leadership capacity in the SPHE department.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principals and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision of each area.

| Level | Description | Example of descriptive terms |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Very Good | Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision. | Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary |
| Good | Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard. | Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement |
| Satisfactory | Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard. | Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas |
| Fair | Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better. | Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve |
| Weak | Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements. | Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties; |

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The BOM is pleased with regard to the positive findings such as the following;

- The school met the requirements in relation to all Child Protection Checks
- Subject provision, whole school support, the quality of planning, school wide initiatives to support SPHE and the timetabling of a dedicated team of teachers were all found to be very good practice.
- SPHE lessons were characterized by an atmosphere of care and respect.
- The very good provision for RSE at Senior Cycle
- Overall, approaches to teaching SPHE and RSE were found to be student centred, active and collaborative.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The Principal and SPHE/RSE team have met and reviewed the Report. The Subject Department has outlined a number of aims for further improvement in relation to the recommendations and it is intended that SPHE will be included on School Reports and at Parent Teacher Meetings.