

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection in Social Personal and Health Education
(SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)**

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | Gonzaga College |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Sandford Road Ranelagh Dublin |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 60530S |

Date of Inspection: 07-11-2019



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) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) 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 did not meet the requirements in relation to 1 above, as the school's risk assessment was not on display, and therefore the school was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken. However, by the end of the day on which the inspection took place, the risk assessment had been prominently displayed in several key areas in the school and the school was then fully compliant.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

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| Dates of inspection | 6 & 7-11-2019 |
| 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 7 lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff |

School context

Gonzaga College is a fee-charging post primary school for boys located in Ranelagh, in Dublin, and is under the patronage of the Society of Jesus. The school has a current enrolment of 551 students and offers the following programmes: the Junior Cycle, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme and the established Leaving Certificate.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning overall was good with some excellent practice observed in many lessons, however, scope for improvement was noted in relation to lesson pace and age appropriate resources in some lessons.
- The learner experience was good overall: students were engaged and enthusiastic about classroom activities, however, the learner experience in a minority of lessons would have been improved by more challenging and interesting material and resources.
- SPHE and RSE are very well supported by senior management, with many positive developments taking place to support both subject areas in recent years, however, there is some scope for further development of student centred activities.
- SPHE and RSE have been linked to the school's self-evaluation (SSE) process which currently has an admirable focus on Wellbeing, through ensuring that students reflect on their learning in different ways.
- The delivery and co-ordination of SPHE and RSE are very capably managed by a highly competent co-ordinator with extensive expertise and knowledge of the subjects.
- Overall planning for SPHE and RSE is good: a good core team of teachers has been identified and they are being sent for training and upskilling on a rotational basis.

Recommendations

- All teachers should ensure that they are using age appropriate, interesting and challenging resources for the delivery of SPHE and RSE and that students are facilitated in all lessons to engage in brainstorming activities and plenary sessions to enhance active learning.
- Senior management should consider the organisation of supportive activities such as a Wellbeing week to further develop the excellent work being carried out to ensure that the importance of SPHE and RSE is recognised by both staff, parents and students.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The overall quality of teaching was good with some excellent practice noted in many lessons. There was scope for improvement in some lessons, particularly in relation to the pitch of the lessons, where some of the material used was too simplistic for the cohort of students. Another area for development is ensuring that lessons are well paced. In a couple of instances too much time was given for classroom tasks leading to students becoming somewhat bored and disengaged.
- The learning experience was good overall and very good in some lessons where students were challenged, facilitated to engage in good debate and discussion and where learning was deeper and more focussed.
- Learning themes for the lessons visited focussed on areas such as: managing stress, cyberbullying, goal setting, minding myself and in RSE the predominant theme was understanding intimacy and safe use of social media. For the most part, lessons were well structured and relevant to the students' lives. Some very good video clips were used to inform students and to facilitate and encourage debate and questions.
- In the less successful lessons, textbooks dictated the structure of the lessons. It is recommended that teachers discuss and share exciting and interesting resources that are relevant to students' lives for the delivery of SPHE and RSE. Resources should of course be appropriate and teachers should follow the relevant school policies in relation to clearing the use of resources on topics which may be controversial with senior management or the SPHE co-ordinator.
- Learning intentions were shared with students at the beginning of some lessons and were revisited at the end to assess student progress and learning. Lack of time precluded plenary sessions or a recap of learning at the end of some lessons and this was due in some part to excessive time being given for some relatively short tasks during the lesson. Teachers should plan carefully for the delivery of the lessons and ensure that some time is available at the end to discuss and assess learning and ideas.
- Active learning was a central feature of all lessons. Pair and group work tasks were used by all teachers to facilitate active learning and student engagement and this is commended. Students were asked to think, pair and share in most lessons and there were very successful plenary sessions in some instances. Students were given place mats or other kinds of work sheets in some lessons and these were used to help them structure their thoughts and opinions. In one case, however, too much time was spent writing in the lesson and this should be avoided.
- In some very successful lessons, students were asked higher-order questions which challenged them to think deeply about the issues in question. Good cross curricular links were made with other subjects and with students' own lives outside school.
- Students and teachers worked very well together and mutual respect was highly evident. Students were encouraged and given time to fill in their reflective journals at the end of lessons. For most class groups visited, the reflective journal took the place of a traditional copybook and was observed to be a good assessment tool overall.
- In line with good practice in SPHE and RSE lessons, students were reminded of class contracts and were advised to be careful of oversharing in a classroom or personal context. In the RSE lesson visited, students were informed that the teacher was a mandated person with specific responsibilities in relation to child protection which were outlined in the context of the lesson topic.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of subject provision is very good. SPHE and RSE are appropriately timetabled and delivered in line with the relevant circulars.
- Whole school support for SPHE and RSE is very good. Senior management take these subject areas and Wellbeing extremely seriously and there have been many whole school initiatives to support the delivery of both subjects in recent years. These include the choice of a very committed and experienced co-ordinator and the identification of a specific cohort of teachers to teach SPHE and RSE.
- A large cohort of teachers is involved in the delivery of SPHE specifically and they have all indicated their wish to teach the subject and their interest in its development. The teachers are being trained and upskilled on a rotational basis and this process is ongoing.
- School management promotes the moral, social and personal development of the students and has regard to the school's characteristic spirit. The development of a number of themed weeks or days to promote awareness of areas such as Wellbeing and personal development should be considered as well as initiatives to combat different kinds of bullying, and substance abuse.
- The SPHE department has a wonderful resource room with a good range of up to date resources. This should be fully utilised by all teachers so that the resources being used in lessons are relevant, interesting and age appropriate.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The co-ordinator of SPHE and RSE has done considerable work on building a plan for the teaching of both subjects in recent years. This plan incorporates links with the school's SSE process and current focus on Wellbeing. Some additional work on incorporating relevant and interesting resources into the plan, by inserting hyperlinks to websites, might facilitate teachers in using a wider variety of material in lessons.
- There are close links between the SPHE department, care and guidance systems ensuring that the delivery of SPHE is central to promoting the personal development of the students.
- The SPHE department is large and so the provision of a dedicated SPHE subject meeting is difficult. However, the co-ordinator links in with all of the teachers on an individual basis and in small groups where possible. Some consideration should be given to the creation of smaller meetings such as a meeting of all those involved in first-year SPHE, second year and so on.
- Teachers should also be facilitated to feedback to other teachers following inservice and upskilling courses and events.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and co-ordinator at the conclusion of the evaluation.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcomes the report and notes the recommendations. The areas addressed in this report will continue to form part of the subject department planning process. The Board commends the coordinator, the teachers and students for their work in the area of SPHE & RSE. With the introduction of the JC Wellbeing programme, the school has responded positively to the need to adopt the SPHE short course.

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

1. Work continues in creating a forum for collaborative planning for teachers involved in delivery of SPHE, RSE and Wellbeing which will assist teachers in ensuring that they are using age appropriate, interesting and challenging resources for the delivery of SPHE and RSE and that students are facilitated in all lessons to engage in brainstorming activities and plenary sessions to enhance active learning.
2. Senior management will also consider the organisation of supportive activities such as a Wellbeing week to further develop the excellent work being carried out to ensure that the importance of SPHE and RSE is recognised by both staff, parents and students. The school has decided to set up a Wellbeing subcommittee which the Co-ordinator of Wellbeing will lead to broaden the scope of work in this key area. This subcommittee will address aspects of the inspection report and whole school engagement in Wellbeing. It is envisaged that work can be done to devise a range of supportive wellbeing activities across the school.

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 of quality 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; |