

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

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

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Uí Mhuirí
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Barn Road Dunleer County Louth
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	71780G

Date of Inspection: 29-11-2017



WHAT IS A 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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	28 & 29-11-2017
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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Scoil Uí Mhuirí is a co-educational school under the auspices of Louth Meath Education and Training Board. It participates in the Department of Education and Skills action plan for educational inclusion, Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS). SPHE, which incorporates Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), is a core component of the school's Junior Certificate programme. Senior-cycle RSE is provided as a component of Personal Development in Transition Year (TY) and Social Education in the Leaving Certificate Applied programme. RSE is also provided as a module to Leaving Certificate students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good, with some very good practice noted.
- In some lessons there was scope to develop teaching approaches to support highly effective processing, consolidation and assessment of students' learning.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is good; aspects of teacher deployment and policy development require attention.
- Teachers are committed to providing for student wellbeing; a good range of whole-school events supports students' social and personal development.
- The overall quality of teachers' collaborative practice is satisfactory; formal collaborative planning structures and practice require development.
- Individual teacher planning for the lessons observed was good and considerable efforts were made to develop additional resources.

Recommendations

- To provide for highly effective learner experiences, strategies that challenge students to reflect on, apply and evaluate their learning should be incorporated into all lessons.
- A core team should be established to lead ongoing planning, review and development of the taught SPHE and RSE programmes; a systematic and incremental programme of teacher continuing professional development (CPD) should support this work.
- School management should make arrangements for the ratification of the draft RSE policy, in accordance with Department circular 0037/2010.
- The junior-cycle SPHE and the senior-cycle RSE programme plans should be further developed to include learning outcomes that demonstrate clear incremental progression, as well as specific assessment approaches.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good, with some very good practice noted. Further consideration should be given to the pace of lessons to incorporate, more fully, strategies that summarise and assess students' progress in the lesson.
- All lessons had a clear focus. High-quality learning was supported when the learning intentions were discussed at the outset. This enabled students to make links with prior learning and supported incremental progression.
- Planned learning activities were well managed and a supportive learning environment was apparent in all lessons. Highly effective student engagement was noted where the ground rules for SPHE lessons were clearly established and consistently implemented.
- Deliberate efforts were made to facilitate experiential learning in all lessons. There was some very effective use of ice-breaker activities and collaborative tasks. Notable attention was paid to enhancing literacy skills. This practice enabled students to engage effectively with lesson tasks.
- In a number of lessons, there was scope to deepen students' learning by slowing down the pace of the plenary sessions. At times, there was an over-reliance on teacher input as students were processing or reflecting on the lesson concepts. Strategies that challenge students to actively reflect on, apply and evaluate their learning should be incorporated into all lessons. Students should be encouraged to link the summary points from discussions back to the intended learning outcomes and to record the key points of information in their notebooks.
- A review of student notebooks indicated some very good practice in the provision of written reflective activities but there is a need to standardise practice. A system of class folders should be established so that students file their workbooks and handouts from first year through to third year. Due to the integrated and holistic nature of the SPHE programme, students need to reflect back on work covered in previous years.
- There is scope to develop assessment practice in SPHE. It is good practice that the school report includes a comment on student participation in SPHE. Consideration needs to be given to developing an assessment framework for SPHE to further enhance the evidence base that informs the feedback provided to parents and students.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support for junior-cycle SPHE and senior-cycle RSE is good.
- Staff are very committed to providing for student wellbeing; a good range of whole-school events supports students' social and personal development.
- The school has developed a number of whole-school policies that support student wellbeing. However, aspects of some policies reviewed are out of date and the RSE policy is in draft form. The board of management should, as a matter of priority, make arrangements for the ratification of the RSE policy, in accordance with Department circular 0037/2010.
- There is very good timetabled provision for junior cycle SPHE. Timetabled RSE provision for Leaving Certificate students is in a period of transition. In this academic year, in order to facilitate the provision of Religious Education (RE) as a Leaving Certificate examination subject, RSE is no longer provided as a component of RE. Therefore, it is planned to provide Leaving Certificate students with a module of RSE during the third term. At the time of the evaluation,

the finer details of this arrangement had yet to be agreed. These arrangements need close review to ensure that this level of provision facilitates an incremental approach to the implementation of a broad and balanced RSE programme.

- Deployment practice for teachers of SPHE needs review. There is a large SPHE team and there has been significant turnover of teachers assigned to SPHE. This presents difficulties in enabling staff to build sufficient expertise in SPHE and in providing learner experiences and outcomes in SPHE that are of consistently high quality. It is recommended that a small core team of SPHE teachers be established. There is sufficient capacity and interest within the staff to establish a highly skilled team of SPHE teachers.
- While there has been good level of past engagement with relevant CPD, there are gaps that need to be addressed among current team members. An audit of SPHE and RSE training needs should be conducted to facilitate the implementation of a systematic and incremental programme of CPD.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of collaborative teachers' practice is satisfactory; formal collaborative planning structures and practice require enhancement.
- Coordinators for SPHE and RSE have been appointed. The coordinators work in a very committed manner and share a vision for the ongoing development of SPHE and RSE programmes.
- Given the size of the SPHE team and the scheduling of planning meetings, full attendance at meetings is difficult to achieve; this is limiting the effectiveness of teachers' collaborative planning for teaching and learning in SPHE. Subject department meetings should be scheduled in a manner that facilitates all teachers to attend.
- The SPHE and RSE co-ordinators have prepared outline common programme plans. It is good practice that relevant information from the Junior Cycle Framework is being integrated into the SPHE plans.
- The junior cycle SPHE and the senior cycle RSE programme plans need further development. Each programme plan should include learning intentions that demonstrate clear incremental progression in students' learning, as well as specific teaching and assessment approaches that proved effective in supporting high-quality learner outcomes and experiences.
- Individual teacher planning for the lessons observed was good, with considerable efforts made to source and integrate resources. This information should be used to inform the further development of the common programme plans.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject co-ordinators 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 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;