

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	Saint Clare's Comprehensive School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Manorhamilton County Leitrim
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	81013P

Date of Inspection: 18-01-2018



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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date(s) of inspection	18-01-2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy 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

Saint Clare's Comprehensive is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 480: 250 boys and 230 girls. The school provides the Junior Certificate, the Leaving Certificate, and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Transition Year is an optional programme. SPHE is a core subject in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the observed lessons was very good; observed assessment practices were of a good standard but there is not an agreed whole-school approach to assessment in SPHE.
- A student-centred approach was employed in all lessons and student engagement was very good in the majority of lessons; there was scope to generate deeper discussion between students in some lessons.
- Timetabling provision is very supportive of students' experience of SPHE; it is commendable that SPHE teachers, who are also class tutors, remain with their groups at each level.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good; some teachers have not had an opportunity to avail of subject-specific in-service training.
- The overall quality of planning and preparation is very good and subject coordination is well structured.

Recommendations

- Teachers should implement strategies which provide opportunities for deeper discussion between students during lessons.
- An audit of professional development needs should be undertaken, and plans to address relevant training needs should be developed.
- The SPHE department should formalise its assessment practices and develop an incremental and whole-school approach to assessment in the subject.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the observed lessons was very good; assessment practices observed were of a good standard.
- The positive relationships developed over time between SPHE teachers and their tutor group is a key strength of the SPHE programme.
- A student-centred approach was observed in all lessons. Teachers were successful in including students in discussions.
- Collaborative learning opportunities were facilitated in all lessons through whole-class discussion, group work or pair work. Very effective group work was observed in some lessons with clear roles assigned and time-bound activities used. Students benefitted from these clear structures.
- A positive learning environment was evident; students were attentive and engaged in the work in all lessons. Students' answers indicated a good understanding of the topic at hand and how it related to their own lives.
- A review of prior learning was facilitated in the majority of lessons; this is particularly helpful in subjects where students meet their teacher once a week.
- Assessment-for-learning (AfL) methodologies were used in the majority of lessons. For example, formal recording of individual reflection was used to very good effect in one lesson and students had the opportunity to deeply reflect on their learning and to personalise their learning by applying it to their own lives. In other lessons, AfL methodologies were used to review the learning from the lesson, however students had no opportunity to reflect on and record their learning. Teachers should, when planning lessons, consider how this reflective practice can be deepened and how student reflections might be stored as a record of student learning.
- Questioning was a key strategy used in all lessons to support student learning. Teachers demonstrated very good facilitation skills in leading discussions. In some lessons, there was scope to generate deeper discussions between students.
- SPHE-related displays were observed in the main school area and in one classroom. It is good practice that an agreed 'class contract' was displayed for ease of reference. Teachers should be encouraged to display students' work and have access to relevant SPHE posters to display as appropriate.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good.
- All students, at both junior cycle and senior cycle level, have access to one class of SPHE for the full school year. This is a commendable commitment to the subject on behalf of senior management.
- School management places a high value on professional development and in recent years has arranged for whole-school in-service on areas directly related to SPHE.
- Teachers expressed a real interest in teaching SPHE and many of the teachers have considerable experience and training in this area. However, not all teachers have received

SPHE-specific in-service training to date. An audit of training needs should be undertaken and a plan put in place to address the training needs of staff.

- A relationships and sexuality education (RSE) policy, ratified by the board of management, is in place since 2014. It is recommended that this policy be reviewed and as part of that review a brief outline of the RSE programme provided from first to sixth year should be appended to the policy. This would provide clarity about the programme to both learners and their parents.
- In all cases, the teacher of SPHE is also the class tutor to the group; approximately half of the teachers also teach their group another subject. Tutors remain with their class group for the duration of their time in school allowing the tutor to develop very supportive and caring relationships with their tutor groups. As the tutor also has designated tutor time every day with their students, there is no loss of teaching time or confusion of roles.
- A variety of extra-curricular activities, for example Girls Active, and whole-school initiatives, such as 'Health Promoting School' and monthly themed weeks, support the teaching and learning of SPHE.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning and preparation is very good.
- Individual lessons observed were well planned and all lessons had good structures with well-established classroom routines. Students experienced activities that were carefully selected, age appropriate and provided for the spiral and developmental nature of SPHE.
- SPHE in the school is delivered by a dedicated team of nineteen teachers. While large, the department is well coordinated by a post holder who ensures that new teachers are inducted effectively into the subject area.
- Well-developed schemes are in place covering all modules of the SPHE programme at both junior cycle and senior cycle levels.
- Formal meetings are held regularly. Due to the size of the SPHE team, regular meetings tend to be held at year-group level. The entire SPHE team meets at least once a year.
- There is no whole-school policy on assessment in SPHE currently and a variety of assessment practices were implemented in the lessons observed. The SPHE department should formalise its assessment practices and develop an incremental and whole-school approach to assessment in the subject.
- All students have a workbook to support their learning in SPHE. A review of workbooks indicated that they are being used infrequently in lessons. The SPHE department should undertake a review of the use of workbooks to determine their usefulness.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

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

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed in the school's reception area.

3. The school has a child protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

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

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers 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 commends the SPHE faculty for its dedication and hard work, as was identified in the inspection report.

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

The SPHE team has commenced work on the recommendations. Action plans have been adopted into the Subject Plan.

The audit of staff experience in SPHE in-service has been completed.

The board of management and the school community will update our RSE Policy.

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;