

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	Blakestown Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Blanchardstown Dublin 15
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91316Q

Date of Inspection: 01-05-2018



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agus Scileanna**
Department of
Education and Skills

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.

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

Dates of inspection	30-04-2018 & 01-05-2018
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

Blakestown Community School (Pobalscoil Éanna) is a co-educational post-primary school in Dublin 15, which operates under the trusteeship of Le Chéile Schools Trust and Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education Training Board. With a current enrolment of 455 students, the school offers Junior Certificate, the new Junior Cycle, the Junior Certificate School Programme, an optional Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied programme. The school participates in the Delivering Equality in Schools (DEIS) action plan.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed ranged from fair to very good.
- A range of teaching approaches was used in lessons, many of which were teacher led.
- The quantity and quality of students' written work varied considerably; some teachers are monitoring this work.
- The school is highly proactive in promoting students' wellbeing; a broad range of whole-school initiatives is in place which complements the work of the SPHE teachers.
- The SPHE team, comprising seventeen teachers who act as tutors to the groups they teach, is larger than optimal.
- The overall quality of planning for SPHE is satisfactory, and preparation for the lessons observed was good.

Recommendations

- SPHE teachers should expand the range of teaching and learning approaches to encourage more active student engagement, while taking cognisance of the experiential learning cycle.
- Senior management should develop a smaller core team of experienced SPHE teachers, and review the timetabling of SPHE in conjunction with tutor periods to ensure that tutorial duties do not impact on teachers' delivery of the required provision of SPHE.
- Senior management should oversee the SPHE department in developing a discrete module of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in TY, in compliance with Circular Letter M11/03; the RSE policy should be updated to document this.
- The SPHE department should collaboratively develop time-bound schemes of work for all year groups that take account of the experiential learning cycle and the spiral and incremental nature of the subject, linked with the school guidance plan and supplementary whole-school activities relevant to SPHE.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from fair to very good.
- Lessons were generally very well prepared with a wide range of relevant teaching resources organised in advance to enhance learning.
- Topics were shared with students in all lessons. This was most effective when expressed in terms of learning intentions. Teachers should ensure that the intended learning builds on prior knowledge and experience, facilitates the development of attitudes and values, and takes cognisance of the spiral and incremental nature of SPHE. In the best lessons teachers allocated time at the end of the lesson to review learning intentions in order to consolidate learning.
- A range of teaching approaches was taken in lessons, many of which were teacher-led. Commendably, lessons generally focused on topical issues that were relevant to students' own interests and experiences. SPHE teachers should expand the range of methodologies used to facilitate more active student engagement, taking cognisance of the experiential learning cycle.
- In some lessons appropriate video clips were used to prompt teacher-led discussion along with worksheets to focus students' attention. This was most effective where sufficient time for a plenary session was provided for students to consider and critically evaluate the issues raised.
- Opportunities for students to collaborate were facilitated in all lessons. Further refinement of the skills and structures associated with group-work is necessary to maximise student participation, engagement and learning from collaborative work.
- Elements of assessment were incorporated into all lessons, mainly through questioning. Students evaluated their own work through reflection sheets in some lessons. All SPHE teachers should adopt this approach.
- In most lessons, teachers addressed questions to the widest possible number of students, however in many instances there was need to elicit more substantial responses. In the best lessons teachers used questioning strategies that required students to develop their answers more fully, to formulate and express opinions, and to engage in debate and discussion.
- The quantity and quality of students' written work varied considerably. Good practice was noted where students' folders are stored by their teachers. Some teachers monitor students' work, but written formative feedback was not in evidence. SPHE teachers should implement an agreed and consistent approach to their expected student engagement in written work, to assessment including the provision of written formative feedback, and to the storage of student work.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support for SPHE is very good. Management is cognisant of the importance of the subject and the role it plays in the holistic development of students.
- School management is highly proactive in promoting students' wellbeing through a range of initiatives including the Amber Flag and events such as the Health and Happiness Week. Student leadership is promoted in this context through the student council's role in organising Anti-Bullying Week, and through the fifth-year student peer education programme with Jigsaw. School management further supports student health and wellbeing through the provision of parent education courses in Cookery and Parenting.

- The newly-introduced Wellbeing programme comprises modules in nutrition, anti-bullying and coding and supports students in their transition from primary school. This should be kept under review to ensure its ongoing effectiveness.
- SPHE is timetabled in conjunction with tutor periods for the majority of class groups. Teachers expressed good commitment to their tutor role and management provided a clear rationale for combining the tutor system with the delivery of SPHE as part of the care strategy. While this promotes the pastoral role of the tutor and ensures continuity for students, tutorial duties such as checking of journals takes time from the delivery of SPHE. Senior management should review the current model to ensure compliance with Circular Letter M11/03.
- The SPHE team comprises seventeen teachers. Senior management should work towards reducing the size of the core team to ensure quality and consistency in the delivery of highly effective teaching and learning in SPHE, and to maximise the expertise within the team.
- In the TY programme RSE and SPHE content is integrated into a range of subject areas, however there is no discrete RSE module. Management should address this to ensure compliance with Circular Letter M11/03 and should update the RSE policy to document the provision in TY.
- A few teachers have accessed recent SPHE training and management encourages CPD. All teachers of SPHE and RSE should engage with current and ongoing CPD. In the interim teachers should make use of the expertise within the SPHE department through internal CPD and peer collaboration.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Senior management supports subject department planning and provides time for the SPHE department to meet. Due to the size of the team, however, meetings are not always practicable. SPHE teachers in their tutor role link with the care team through weekly meetings with year heads. Where feasible, teaching, learning and assessment strategies for delivery of SPHE should be included on the agenda for these meetings.
- The overall quality of subject planning for SPHE is satisfactory. All relevant policies are documented in the SPHE plan. Long-term plans are in place for junior cycle which outlines the list of modules to be covered each year and the TY plan outlines links with a range of subjects where students experience SPHE in action across their curriculum.
- Schemes of work for first year have been developed to reflect the new Junior Cycle specification. Senior cycle schemes of work include learning outcomes for relevant topics and methodologies to deliver content. The SPHE department should collaboratively develop time-bound schedules for the delivery of SPHE for all year groups that takes account of the experiential learning cycle and the spiral and incremental nature of the subject, linked with the school guidance plan and supplementary whole-school activities related to SPHE.
- A new subject co-ordinator is in place for SPHE and senior management reported that, in line with good practice and to develop capacity, it plans to rotate this role.

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

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 in 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;