An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Kildare Town Community School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Kildare Co Kildare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>91530S</td>
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Date of Inspection: 07-03-2018
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.
INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>22&amp;23-02-2018 &amp; 07-03-2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning during 7 class periods</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discussion with principal and key staff</td>
<td>• Feedback to deputy principals and relevant staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Interaction with students</td>
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School context

Kildare Town Community School (CS) is a large co-educational post-primary school in Kildare. With a current enrolment of 885 students, the school operates under the aegis of Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board and the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin. Programmes offered include the new Junior Cycle, Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate Established, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied and an optional Transition Year (TY). The school also has a unit for students with autistic spectrum disorder.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from satisfactory to very good.
- Most teachers facilitated learning that was active and collaborative.
- Subject provision and support for SPHE is satisfactory overall.
- A very good range of whole-school initiatives is provided to support student well-being and complement the SPHE programme.
- A highly dedicated subject co-ordinator is in place, and a large team of teachers is responsible for the delivery of SPHE.
- The overall quality of planning and preparation for SPHE is satisfactory

Recommendations

- Experiential learning should be developed further, and the current emphasis on knowledge and understanding should be expanded to include a greater focus on skills, attitudes and values.
- To ensure the delivery of the required SPHE provision in line with Circular Letter 27/2008, the current arrangement, whereby junior cycle SPHE lessons are split between SPHE and guidance teachers, should be reviewed.
- To build capacity and expertise for teachers of SPHE, and to ensure continuity for students, the size of the core team should be reduced; and those responsible for delivering the subject should engage in current and ongoing continuing professional development (CPD).
- Subject planning should be developed collaboratively by SPHE teachers; and the role of subject co-ordinator should be rotated to build capacity in the subject department.
1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning in most lessons was satisfactory or good, with very good practice noted in a few lessons.
- Learning intentions were shared with students in the majority of lessons. In a few instances success criteria were also shared, and learning was reviewed. This good practice should be extended to all lessons.
- Overall, learning had a good focus on knowledge and understanding of the topic. To build on this, learning should also include exploration of the skills, attitudes and values to be gained or developed in the lesson.
- Supplementary class materials were provided by teachers in most lessons. In a few lessons video clips were used to enhance learning and were most effective when used early in the lesson to prompt discussion.
- Opportunities for active learning were provided for students in most lessons. This was most effective where students were encouraged to consider and critically evaluate issues during activity based learning, and where sufficient time for plenary sessions was provided. To ensure that students benefit fully from activities facilitated in lessons, the experiential learning cycle should be utilised in the approach to exploring topics.
- Teachers facilitated collaborative learning in most lessons, and students generally engaged enthusiastically. Some further refinement of the skills associated with group-work, such as greater structure to the activity, should yield more effective learning and engagement for students.
- Classroom management was good in the majority of lessons, and a good rapport was noted between teachers and students overall. This was most evident where lessons were well-structured and where a good balance between teacher instruction and student input was achieved.
- Limited samples of SPHE subject material and student work were on display in classrooms. Commendably, a class contract has been drawn up by most class groups, and was referred to in a few lessons. Where feasible, consideration should be given to keeping the contract on display in classrooms to remind students of their responsibilities, particularly in relation to sensitive topics. The display of student work and subject related visual material should also be considered.
- Commendably, most students evaluate their own work through the evaluation sections in their workbooks. The good practice noted in the minority of lessons where student work was consistently set and monitored by the class teacher, and where written formative feedback was also provided, should be adopted by all teachers of SPHE.
- Systems for students to record and store their work varies from group to group. Most student work is recorded in workbooks, and at times in copybooks and worksheets. The SPHE department should develop a consistent approach to the setting, monitoring, assessment, display and storage of student work for all class groups, with less reliance on the textbook.
2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision and support for SPHE is satisfactory. SPHE is appropriately timetabled in junior cycle, and the Religious Education (RE) subject plan documents delivery of senior cycle Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) as a discrete module within the RE programme.
- The school has recently introduced some co-timetabling for SPHE and guidance teachers to provide additional support to students. In some instances lessons were being split between SPHE and Guidance, reducing lesson time for SPHE to twenty minutes. While links with Guidance are to be encouraged, the practice of splitting lessons should be discontinued to ensure the required SPHE provision in line with Circular Letter 27/2008.
- A large team of SPHE teachers is in place. While the principal reported that efforts are made to allocate teachers with an interest and aptitude for the subject, members of the team vary from year to year. The establishment of a core team of teachers is strongly recommended, and deployment should be informed by consultation with teachers. Senior management could also work towards the ideal of seeking to ensure that teachers remain with their class group for the three years of junior cycle.
- School management is supportive of CPD and a minority of teachers have accessed recent training. Commendably, learning from CPD is shared with SPHE teachers through a report from the attendees. A systematic and incremental approach should be adopted to the ongoing training of all SPHE and RSE teachers to ensure high quality teaching and learning for all students.
- A proactive well-being committee has been established to develop a range of high-quality initiatives and activities such as Well-being Week and the Amber Flag. Commendably, an action plan is in place to enhance students’ understanding and learning relative to health and well-being, and to complement the SPHE programme.
- Relevant whole-school policies have been developed and ratified. The recently updated RSE policy should be further reviewed to fully document provision in TY.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A highly committed co-ordinator manages all planning work, including the development of a subject plan, and handbook for teachers which outlines schemes of work for delivery of curricular content. In time the position of subject co-ordinator should be rotated amongst SPHE teachers, as it would promote a greater sharing of the workload attached to the role of co-ordinator. In the interim, role of assistant co-ordinator should be considered to build capacity in the team.
- Overall, planning and preparation was satisfactory. While the textbook was a dominant resource used in most lessons, additional resources such as worksheets and presentations were prepared by most teachers to enhance learning activities.
- Management facilitates subject-department planning meetings each term. Minutes reviewed during the evaluation noted that most teachers have not attended recent meetings. This was reported to be due to the feasibility of attendance at both SPHE and their other subject meetings. A reduction in the size of the SPHE team should help to address this.
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 near the main doors of the school.
3. The school has a Child Safeguarding Statement 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 deputy principals and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

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.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td><em>Very good</em> 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 <em>outstanding</em> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.</td>
<td>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</td>
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<td>Good</td>
<td><em>Good</em> 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 <em>very good</em> standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td><em>Satisfactory</em> 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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<td>Fair</td>
<td><em>Fair</em> 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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<td>Weak</td>
<td><em>Weak</em> 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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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