

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

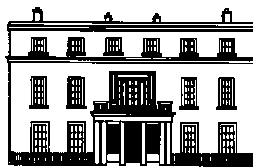
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Social, Personal and Health  
Education**

**REPORT**

**Rice College  
Westport, County Mayo  
Roll number: 647000**

**Date of inspection: 10 October 2014**



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F  
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N  
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

**REPORT**  
**ON**  
**THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SOCIAL, PERSONAL AND**  
**HEALTH EDUCATION (SPHE) AND RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY**  
**EDUCATION (RSE)**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

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| <b>Dates of inspection</b>  | 9 and 10 October 2014  |
| <b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</li></ul> |

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in SPHE ranged from good to very good, with some exemplary practice observed.
- A variety of active learning strategies and stimulating resources engaged students effectively.
- A supportive and caring classroom atmosphere, characterised by positive student-teacher rapport, was evident.
- Students' progress is assessed and monitored as an integral component of lessons and there is scope to further explore the area of assessment and a reflective portfolio.
- There is positive whole-school support for SPHE, engagement with SPHE-related training is significant and a range of student-support structures provide a strong network of supports.
- Subject planning in SPHE as well as in Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is good, with some scope for development.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Assessment in SPHE should be further explored, and an assessment policy for SPHE should be developed and implemented; in particular, the SPHE team should collectively develop and implement a range of summative assessment tasks to determine students' engagement and learning in SPHE.
  - The existing policies for RSE, substance use and pastoral care should be reviewed and expanded.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Rice College, established in its current location in 1987 is an all-boys secondary school operating under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice School Trust (ERST). The school has a current enrolment of 519 students. The school provides a very broad curriculum including an optional Transition Year (TY).

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The standard of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in the lessons observed with some excellent examples of experiential learning noted.
- Lessons were purposeful, well-structured and delivered at a pace that took account of students' needs and abilities. Where best practice was observed, lessons were planned to serve specific learning outcomes which were shared at the beginning of lessons and returned to at the lesson closure.
- Teachers make very good use of a wide range of relevant teaching resources, including information and communication technology (ICT). These resources are used in planning, and to enhance teaching and consolidate learning.
- A good range of well-managed active-learning methodologies was utilised, for example: brainstorming, pair work, group tasks, discussion, and walking debate. These strategies were most effective where they facilitated active student engagement with the lesson material.
- There was some very good use of targeted questioning to test students' knowledge, to elicit information from students, and to challenge them to reflect on the lesson topic. Teaching and learning were most effective where students were appropriately challenged by higher-order questions.
- Good attention was paid to literacy and subject-specific terminology was reinforced well, as well as a focus on numeracy in some lessons. There was a good focus on developing students' oral literacy skills in many lessons.
- Very good rapport between teachers and students was evident. A strong pastoral approach was evident in the management of classes that resulted in positive interactions between teachers and students and an atmosphere that was conducive to learning.
- Students' behaviour was very good and they engaged enthusiastically in their learning. The learning environment of classrooms was enhanced through displays of SPHE related materials.
- Students worked well both individually and collaboratively and demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the concepts related to the various topics, appropriate to their level. Students' books and folders indicate good progression in their work. The potential for students to use the materials and reflections in their SPHE folder as the basis for the development of a reflective portfolio should be explored. This could be used to inform the ongoing review of SPHE in line with school self-evaluation.
- Teachers view assessment in SPHE as part of the activity of teaching and learning and use a variety of assessment modes to measure students' progress in SPHE. In order to enhance current practices, the SPHE team should further explore the areas of assessment and reflection in SPHE. In particular, the SPHE team should collectively develop and

implement a range of summative assessment tasks to determine students' engagement and learning in SPHE. This would provide a useful evidence base for reporting to parents.

- An assessment policy for SPHE should be agreed and implemented to reflect the good practices and procedures observed. Assessment criteria, linked to intended learning outcomes, should also be devised and implemented.

#### **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- There is very good whole-school support for SPHE which is embedded in the school's wide-ranging pastoral care provision. There is very good collaboration in supporting students' welfare and a cohesive range of student-support structures exist. Noteworthy initiatives, such as the pastoral care team, the mentoring programme, a positive living week, the Mind-Out programme with outside facilitators, as well as a range of guest speakers supplement the SPHE programme well.
- Timetable provision for SPHE is appropriate and in line with Circular M11/03. The RSE programme is provided as an integral part of junior cycle SPHE and is delivered on a modular basis in the context of Religious Education at senior cycle. Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) students study aspects of health education as part of their Social Education module.
- In conjunction with the neighbouring all-girls school TY students benefit from some shared curriculum access as well as being involved in a range of positive initiatives, such as a joint musical, a cultural tour as well as anti-bullying programmes.
- A large team is involved in SPHE delivery and teachers display a high level of commitment. The role of SPHE co-ordinator is currently undertaken on a temporary-voluntary basis by a teacher who is new to teaching SPHE.
- The school's engagement with SPHE-related training is significant and reflects great commitment from the principal and the SPHE teachers. Several teachers have training in RSE and there is a commitment to continue to avail of RSE training as necessary. Whole-staff in-service has also been provided in various SPHE related areas.
- The school informs parents of students' progress in SPHE appropriately through school reports, letters, the school newsletter and annual parent-teacher meetings.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The SPHE team engages in collaborative planning both on a formal and informal basis and good progress has been made to date in developing a subject plan.
- Detailed schemes of work have been developed for all year groups. These include time frames for the teaching of topics; the learning outcomes to be attained; the corresponding methodologies and resources and agreed assessment modes, albeit that there is scope to further develop the assessment aspect. Schemes also include a review section to support self-evaluation and to inform future planning. An outline checklist plan should also be developed for SPHE. The current assessment procedures as documented in the subject plan should be reviewed with a view to formulating policy to enhance student assessment in SPHE.

- The existing RSE policy should be reviewed and expanded to ensure that it provides clear guidance to parents, students, and teachers on how all aspects of the programme are delivered. Outline senior cycle RSE plans should be included in the RSE policy. Policies in relation to substance use and pastoral care also need to be updated and expanded.
- There was evidence of very good lesson planning and preparation, tailored for individual class groups.
- The SPHE team has shown considerable capacity for self-evaluation and improvement. Students undertake end-of-module reviews to inform future planning. The next step for the team is to regularly agree on developmental priorities for SPHE and to implement action plans including success criteria designed to appraise progress.

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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 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.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

### **Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management and staff of Rice College wish to acknowledge the inspector's positive findings and recognition of the commitment to SPHE and RSE in our school. The inspector's report portrays an accurate and fair reflection of the provision of SPHE and RSE in Rice College and we are very pleased with the report. We appreciate the many aspects commended by the inspector and her acknowledgement of our good practices in the provision, planning and delivery of SPHE and RSE in our school. We are extremely pleased with her appreciation of the strong pastoral approach used in our classes leading to the positive atmosphere and good rapport with our students.

### **Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

The SPHE department will act on the inspector's recommendations outlined in the report to further enhance the provision of SPHE/RSE in Rice College. The RSE policy has been reviewed and amended. We are working on reviewing and expanding our substance use and pastoral care policies. Work has commenced on improving the area of assessment in SPHE and plan to introduce summative assessment tasks on a regular basis.