

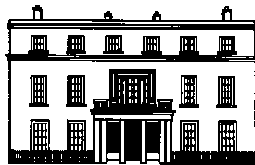
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**Tullow Community School  
Tullow, County Carlow  
Roll number: 91356F**

**Date of inspection: 14 April 2011**



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF  
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION  
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	14 April 2011
<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><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Conduct of structured interview with group of senior cycle students</li><li>• Administration of questionnaire to two groups of third-year students</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning observed varied considerably with very good practice noted in some instances and considerable shortcomings in others.
- In a number of lessons, poor structuring was noted, lesson discussion did not have clear purpose, lesson activities were not directed and there was substantial scope for the use of the experiential learning cycle.
- Appropriate provision is made for SPHE in junior cycle, and appropriate time is allocated to RSE in senior cycle, but this provision should be formalised.
- Good policies are in place to support SPHE and RSE.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- SPHE lessons should be clearly structured with purposeful learning activities devised and the experiential learning cycle applied.
  - Teachers should discuss and agree common strategies for assessment and for establishing consistency of expectations regarding student written work.
  - All teachers deployed to SPHE and RSE should engage in initial and continuation training; this should be urgently addressed through a three-year continuing professional development (CPD) plan overseen by management.
  - A developmental RSE programme for senior cycle should be formalised and implemented consistently with all class groups.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Tullow Community School is a co-educational school with an enrolment of 572 students and is the only provider of post-primary education in the locality. The school provides the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) for mainstream students. Provision of both the Transition Year programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied programme was recently discontinued. SPHE is provided on the timetable for one period per week during first, second and third year. RSE is delivered as a component of SPHE in junior cycle and as a modular component during lessons in Religion and Guidance in fifth year and pastoral care lessons in sixth year.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Lessons visited varied widely in structure and teaching methodologies. Very good practice was noted in some instances, including one lesson with developmental learning activities and good closure, while there were considerable shortcomings in others.
- In some lessons, it was clear to students what teachers intended in terms of learning but in others it was less clear. To focus student learning, all teachers should share the intended learning outcomes with students and use them to reinforce learning at key points.
- In many instances, teachers structured lessons to include the dissemination of information through instruction and the integration of opportunities for discussion. The discussions sometimes enabled students to explore their own opinions and values and those of others. In many other instances, discussions should have had clearer aims or been matched with a particular learning outcome to generate more productively structured dialogue.
- In most instances, students made contributions to ongoing discussions in orderly and constructive ways. In a few other instances, students should have been given boundaries or more productive learning activities.
- While varied strategies and resources were used in some lessons, there is scope to broaden the range of teaching approaches used in SPHE. All teachers should give greater attention to planning and embedding the experiential learning cycle so students actively experience, process, generalise and apply learning. In addition, teachers should incorporate greater opportunities for co-operative learning such as group and pair work.
- There were many instances noted where the all-round development of the individual was nurtured and supported. In some instances, teachers adapted their lesson plan to respond appropriately to issues raised.
- In some class groups, students had built up a body of relevant work of fairly good quality, sometimes in portfolios. Less often, student writing extended to long pieces such as learning logs. Within the subject department, teachers should discuss and establish consistency of standards for students' written work as well as extending the range of approaches to building assessable written work in the subject.
- Feedback and affirmation are given to students by teachers during classroom interactions. Feedback to parents is given at parent-teacher meetings and on school reports. Teachers should continue to build a bank of suitable comments for the reports, to reflect student achievement of syllabus objectives as well as approaches to assessment.

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

- Appropriate timetable provision is made for SPHE in junior cycle but some students are withdrawn from SPHE lessons for resource teaching. This should be discontinued.
- The time allocated to RSE in senior cycle is good and students learn RSE through a range of subjects. However, this may be fragmenting provision. Commendably, this is under review by management. The focused interview with students revealed that the programme delivered depended on the teacher. Greater consistency of implementation of a common programme should be ensured.
- Teachers and management should proceed with plans to formalise a coherent senior-cycle programme for RSE. This should match curriculum guidelines and set out organisational, curricular and teaching details including a calendar of lessons for each year.
- In order to consolidate a smaller long-term team guided by the co-ordinator, management has recently discontinued the practice of automatically assigning class tutors to SPHE. This is welcomed but there are still large numbers involved.
- Management should continue to consolidate teacher capacity in SPHE and RSE and only deploy teachers with recent training and long-term interest and aptitude.
- Most teachers have not participated in recent training in SPHE. Participation in initial and continuation training is strongly recommended for all and should be urgently addressed through a three-year CPD plan.
- Two RSE teachers recently participated in training in the delivery of the resource entitled *TRUST* and intend to use it in developing the senior-cycle RSE programme. This training is recommended for all RSE teachers.
- In its policies and practices, the school places strong emphasis on student support. A wide range of initiatives and in-school services promote student care.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- SPHE subject department planning meetings take place twice per year and these are co-ordinated by a member with training in the subject and its co-ordination. Separate senior-cycle RSE team meetings could be useful at times.
  - The subject plan for SPHE provides detail on all aspects. Whole-school events such as anti-bullying week are integrated. To progress the plan, it is recommended that the subject department construct a curriculum plan for each year group that integrates the syllabus learning outcomes with topics, resources and suggested teaching and learning strategies. This could also serve as tool to broaden the teaching approaches to the subject.
  - A fairly good range of resources and reference material has been collated and is easily accessed. Teachers are advised on these by the co-ordinator. Teachers highlighted the need for further resources for senior cycle.
  - The school has good policies in place for SPHE and RSE. The policies support the developmental approach to each subject, support a moral and ethical framework and outline sound practices on the use of guest speakers to support classroom teaching.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal 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 evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to this report.

*Published November 2011*

# **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 commends the work of the SPHE co-ordinator and teachers of SPHE. The Board acknowledges that the four recommendations of the report are a means of building on the school's strengths in this subject area. The Board views the recommendation that all teachers of SPHE should engage in CPD training on a regular basis as sensible but points out that there are resource issues in providing for this. It is also intended that a review of the RSE programme at senior level will take place in the coming year. The students' exposure to SPHE continues throughout the year when students have regular visits from speakers on related themes. Induction week, Anti-bullying week, Mental Health Week also bring SPHE themes into the domain of students all year round regardless of the timing of their modules. The Guidance Counsellor can also access students during the year.

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

All the recommendations in the report regarding the provision of SPHE in the school are being examined as part of a whole school review of curriculum and teaching and learning needs.