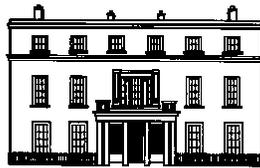


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**Ramsgrange Community School  
Co. Wexford  
Roll number: 91431Q**

**Date of inspection: 25 January 2013**



**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>	22 and 25 January 2013
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal</li><li>• Discussion with teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning was almost always good or very good; key features of teaching and learning included open and facilitative teaching and participative and experiential learning methodologies.
- Good curricular provision is made for first, second, third and fifth year and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) but provision for RSE should be enhanced in Transition Year (TY) and sixth year.
- Teacher deployment is very good with very high levels of motivation, resourcefulness and commitment to ongoing continuing professional development (CPD).
- The quality of subject and lesson planning is excellent with commendable developmental approaches.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- To build on good practices observed, all lessons should be structured to allow time for the exposition of intended learning outcomes and for students to engage in the application of their learning.
  - A class-based curricular programme for RSE in TY and sixth year should be further developed to fit developmentally with the fifth year programme.
  - The RSE policy should be progressed as planned.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Ramsgrange Community School provides co-educational education to 359 students. The school provides a wide range of post-primary curricular programmes including optional TY and LCA programmes. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Lessons were generally well structured, mostly creative in their design and well paced in their delivery. Teachers used variety of methodologies including the facilitation of good opportunities for active and experiential learning.
- Students were encouraged to contribute and to express their view points. Very good discussions were facilitated and in general students responded very well both in groups and as a whole class. This was particularly well facilitated in a LCA lesson on ‘taking charge’ and a second-year lesson on ‘cyber-bullying’. Scenarios were used at times to encourage student participation on sensitive issues. Circle time was well used in a first and second-year lesson and students were confident in participating in and contributing to these groups.
- The experiential learning cycle was used well in most lessons. In all lessons, students were given opportunities in the first two phases of the cycle, namely an ‘activity’ and for ‘processing’ the information, including exploring their initial reactions. Some lessons were structured to allow adequate time for the ‘generalising’ and ‘applying’ phases of the cycle. In these, consideration was given to how the generalisations extracted from the sharing and discussion influenced attitudes and behaviours in the context of moral, spiritual and cultural values and how the learning could be applied in new situations.
- In one lesson, the intended learning outcomes were communicated to students providing for the three domains of learning: the development of knowledge, attitudes and skills, in both personal and social aspects. This approach is recommended for all lessons.
- Through an effective focus on oral literacy, students were supported to verbalise and make frequent use key words in the topic.
- The stimulating learning environment was supported by good classroom layouts and displays of motivational phrases linked to aspects of SPHE. The classroom environment was further supported through teacher use of the good information and communication technology (ICT) facilities and resources.
- The school is proactive in promoting a positive environment for learning. Key messages in regard to respect, courtesy and behaviour were communicated in a consistent and clearly visible manner throughout. In most instances, teachers had established excellent rapport and students demonstrated high levels of ability to listen and show respect for the views of others. Weaknesses in classroom management were evident in one lesson which hindered productive learning.
- Assessment formed part of the continuous process of teaching and learning, in that students were given ongoing feedback on their contributions and they were given time for personal reflection tasks, usually at the end of lessons. In most instances, this extended to written reflections but there is scope to extend the use of the reflective journal in LCA.
- Assessment provides the basis of communication with parents with student participation in SPHE being reported on during parent-teacher meetings and on school reports. A bank of

appropriate statements should be prepared for such use that would report the acquisition of syllabus objectives and learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

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

- SPHE is properly timetabled for one period per week for all students in first, second and third year. Generous provision is made for first year; classes are split in to two smaller groups allowing rotation so the guidance counsellor can teach each group for a period, thereby enabling cross-curricular and whole-school approaches to student wellbeing.
- In junior cycle, RSE is provided by the classroom teacher as an integral component of SPHE, in line with the syllabus. RSE is provided for students following the LCA programme as an integral part of Social Education. Senior cycle RSE teachers should review the learning outcomes for RSE in Social Education to ensure there is coherence with the RSE programme for Leaving Certificate students.
- A twelve-week curricular module in RSE is provided in fifth year. This is delivered in-class by a trained teacher during some of the timetable allowance for Religious Education and the curriculum is based on the *TRUST* resource. This is commendable provision.
- Provision for RSE in TY and sixth year, however, should be further developed and enhanced as there is no timetabled curricular programme for these groups at present. It is recommended that management takes steps to enable the provision of a developmental programme of RSE in senior cycle, in accordance with circular 27/2008, the *RSE Interim Curriculum and Guidelines* and the *Senior Cycle SPHE Draft Curriculum Framework*. This would build on the current use of external agencies that provide short inputs on aspects of sexual health and mental health to these groups. A developmental programme across each year of senior cycle would promote students' capacity to acquire knowledge and to develop their beliefs, attitudes and values as they mature.
- Tutor time is sometimes used to provide for aspects of whole-school social, personal and health education and this is well co-ordinated through a system whereby teachers design and share lesson plans with class tutors. Weekly school care team meetings also promote student wellbeing.
- Teacher deployment is very good with high levels of motivation and resourcefulness demonstrated by the team involved. Very good approaches are taken to ongoing teacher professional development in SPHE, RSE and courses relating to student welfare, included externally accredited courses and in-service provided by the Post-Primary SPHE Support Service. Introductory training for substitute teachers deployed to SPHE should be provided as early as possible.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject and lesson planning has a highly developmental focus with an action plan in place. Commendably, the team plans to progress the monitoring and review aspects of their work. Regular meetings of the team, both on a formal and informal basis, support the collaborative approach to planning.
- A set of high quality shared lesson plans has been prepared for curricular topics. Under the very good leadership of the co-ordinator, teachers have been working continuously on the development of these for their school.

- A wide range of very suitable, varied and age-appropriate resources has been developed to support all aspects of the programmes and these match the needs of the student cohort. Particular emphasis has been placed on developing resources for third year, enabling teachers to move away from relying on the use of a single textbook. The level of detail, range and quality of these teacher-generated resources for third year is very high.
- A SPHE policy has been developed which involved consultation with all partners in the school community. A draft RSE policy is ready for consultation. Both policies make reference to the use of guest speakers and include provision for ground rules and evaluation however, these references would benefit from being streamlined.

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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teacher 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.