

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

**Woodbrook College
Bray, County Wicklow
Roll number: 61790D**

Date of inspection: 19 May 2016



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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	19 May 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teaching staff• Interaction with students• Examination of students' work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teaching staff

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of the teaching and learning observed ranged from good to very good, although the assessment of learning requires development.
- Teachers planned and implemented an integrated approach to teaching the curricular modules and learning outcomes.
- Teachers facilitated learning that was active, experiential and collaborative.
- The atmosphere for learning was very positive and respectful, and students engaged productively in lessons.
- Support from management for SPHE and RSE is good although some development is required in relation to teacher deployment, teacher professional development and the curricular arrangements for RSE in senior cycle, including Transition Year (TY).
- The quality of subject department planning for SPHE was good, but collaborative subject planning for the RSE curriculum was lacking.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should significantly develop the formative and summative assessment processes in SPHE and develop procedures for reporting on learning in SPHE and RSE.
- Senior management should review aspects of the current arrangements for curricular RSE including timetabling, planning and teacher deployment, and should ensure that all teachers of SPHE and RSE undertake initial and ongoing training in the subjects.
- Collaborative planning for RSE as a continuous and developmental programme from first year through to sixth year, including TY, should be instigated.

INTRODUCTION

Woodbrook College, formerly St Brendan's College, is an all-boys' secondary school on the outskirts of Bray with a current enrolment of 327 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, an optional TY, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the established Leaving Certificate programmes.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- In the lessons observed, the quality of the teaching and learning ranged from good to very good. Lessons were well-planned and interactive and students were making good progress with the SPHE curriculum. Some good practices were observed in the assessment of learning during lessons though overall, this aspect of teaching and learning requires development.
- Teachers placed commendable focus on implementing an integrated SPHE programme and planned lessons that developed skills as well as knowledge. Together with learning about relationships and sexuality, learning was focused on developing emotional health and helping the students to reflect on and discuss positive self-image. In another lesson, as well as learning concepts from the module 'belonging and integrating', students were enabled to build their communication skills.
- At the start of lessons, teachers drew students' attention to the intended learning outcomes. Awareness of the purpose of lessons and the lesson tasks served to greatly enhance student engagement.
- Best practice was observed when shared learning outcomes were revisited. In one lesson this was achieved through examination of a set of success criteria that had been drafted from the learning intentions. The teacher sought examples from students of how the success criteria had been achieved and students were active in processing those criteria. The extension of this approach to all lessons could be one way of giving more focus to assessment and enhancing students' awareness of their individual development in terms of knowledge, skills and values.
- Teachers used the whiteboard well, emphasising important terms and collating contributions. The showing of well-selected video and internet resources also stimulated learning.
- Teachers facilitated learning that was active. Lessons included structured tasks that were integrated with well-timed plenary sessions. The tasks included brainstorming, pair work, artwork and written responses. Students engaged actively with tasks and made good contributions to their lessons, working very well individually and in groups. There were smooth transitions and a good flow to the lessons.
- Good use of the 'think, pair, share' technique enabled students to 'process' and 'generalise' key aspects of the lesson's themes. At these times, the teacher's management of the activity ensured good productivity. Similarly, during the plenary phases, good questioning consolidated learning and deepened understanding. In some lessons, students were given the opportunity to come forward and note their group's points on the board.
- At times, students were encouraged to write longer sentences using keywords, but at other times, students writing skills in the subject could have been developed. In some groups, students had limited work in their SPHE copy books, workbooks and folders. Extending the opportunities for students to write, particularly longer pieces, would

develop literacy and contribute greatly to the body of work that could be used for summative assessment and reporting.

- It is recommended that SPHE and RSE be placed on school reports, that a bank of suitable assessment comments be developed for use with the subjects and that parents be given ongoing feedback on their child's learning in the subjects.
- The atmosphere for learning was positive. Students' contributions to sensitive topics were respectful and they adhered to the collective achievement of the intended learning outcomes. It is commendable that, at key times, students were encouraged to reflect on their own unique identities and talents in positive ways. This greatly supported the promotion of self-esteem.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- It was clear that SPHE and RSE are of high importance to management and teachers. The subjects are the contexts for education in substance use, health, relationships and sexuality. The subjects augment the school's student support structures, anti-bullying procedures and extra-curricular activities, including whole-school themed-weeks in aspects of health promotion
- SPHE is appropriately timetabled for first, second and third year. Due to the number of groups involved, responsibility for teaching SPHE could be shared more evenly between the teachers allocated. It is also recommended that all teachers deployed to the subject receive essential training in SPHE, including junior-cycle RSE, and maintain ongoing professional development in the subject.
- There has been some erroneous doubling up of relationships and sexuality education in SPHE and Religious Education (RE) lessons and this ought to be addressed. Junior-cycle RSE is an integral and integrated part of the SPHE curriculum.
- Currently, senior-cycle RSE is provided modularly for six weeks in fifth and sixth year for Leaving Certificate and LCVP students during time taken from RE lessons and delivered by RE teachers. For the LCA, RSE is provided during Social Education. This year, senior-cycle RSE was not provided in TY and this is a required development. Consideration could be given to the inclusion of Personal Development or senior-cycle SPHE in the TY programme to provide a relevant means of integrating RSE.
- There are some issues pertaining to the current arrangements for senior-cycle RSE; not all teachers had full or recent professional training in RSE and the positioning of curricular RSE with curricular RE could present challenges for students of the subjects. These challenges can be overcome, but ought to be given greater consideration.
- Overall, teacher deployment in SPHE and RSE, for the immediate and long term, requires attention from management.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Individually, teachers prepared very well for their lessons. Collaborative planning for SPHE is increasing. Good practice in action planning was evident in meeting minutes. Good attention has been given to developing a set of relevant and up-to-date resources.
- Collaborative planning for RSE as a continuous and developmental programme from first year through to sixth year, including TY, should be instigated. All those responsible for

junior and senior-cycle RSE should meet regularly to discuss the curricular programme and good practice in pedagogical approaches for its delivery, and regularly review students' progress within the programme.

- A RSE policy has been developed providing guidance to the school community on provision in this area within the value system of the school. Within the policy, circular content is listed for junior and senior cycle. The school should ensure that the content for senior cycle is in alignment with the *RSE Interim Curriculum Guidelines* and *Circular 0027/2008*. The policy includes commitment to evaluation and review. It is suggested that this commitment extends to a regular review of the effectiveness of the RSE programme, involving student feedback, staff review and feedback and parental feedback.

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 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

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school management and members of the SPHE/RSE Team in Woodbrook College, welcome the report. We are very happy with the many positive comments and commendations contained in the report and feel that the report reflects the huge effort and work put into the teaching of SPHE and RSE by the teaching team involved. We welcome the constructive recommendations contained in the report and will take steps to implement these findings and recommendations.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

Our strand 3 topic under our programme of School Self Evaluation is Assessment for Learning and in the course of our work here we will address the development of formative and summative assessment processes.

On-going assessment in SPHE will form part of our in-school assessment programme which is performed five times during the academic year. A report on SPHE will be included in student reports going forward.

Three teachers are now involved in delivering SPHE at junior cycle and each has an equal spread of class groups.

The RSE team have already met as part of the pre-planning for the 2016/2017 school year and will continue to meet throughout the year as time permits.

All teachers of SPHE will be attending in-career development courses on SPHE delivered by the PDST during the 2016/2017 academic year subject to places being available.