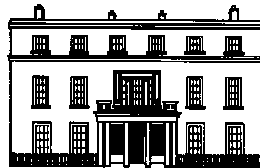


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Social, Personal and Health
Education (SPHE)
REPORT**

**Royal School
College Street, Cavan, County Cavan
Roll number: 61080S**

Date of inspection: 23 September 2015



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

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	23 September 2015
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good in all of the lessons observed.
- Planned lessons facilitated experiential learning with a very good balance between knowledge acquisition, skills development and the promotion of positive behaviours.
- Students displayed a commendable ability to work in collaboration with their peers and were confident communicators.
- The SPHE team is committed to formalising assessment practice and some very good progress has been made.
- SPHE and senior cycle Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) benefits from a very good level of subject provision and whole-school support.
- High-quality reflective practice underpins subject department planning in SPHE.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assessment criteria and descriptors should be devised for a small number of key assessment tasks for inclusion in the junior cycle and Transition Year (TY) programme plans.
 - The junior cycle SPHE plan should be developed further with relevant co-curricular and cross-curricular activities fully integrated into the programme plan.
 - Learning outcomes for each area of learning should be incorporated into the SPHE programme plan for TY.
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INTRODUCTION

The Royal School Cavan is a co-educational boarding and day school which caters for 230 second-level students. The Junior Certificate, a compulsory TY, and Leaving Certificate programmes are provided in the school. SPHE, which incorporates RSE, is a core component of the Junior Certificate and TY programmes. Senior cycle RSE is provided as a module in fifth year and sixth year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good in all of the lessons observed. Lessons were planned in a manner that facilitated experiential learning, with good use made of additional resources to support learning.
- The learning outcomes chosen for lessons were relevant to students and demonstrated a very good balance between knowledge acquisition, skills development and the promotion of positive behaviours.
- Learning outcomes were shared at the start of all lessons. This strategy proved effective in focusing students' attention on the learning expectations of each lesson. The outcomes should be re-visited during lessons to assess progress and to provide additional opportunities for student reflection and self-evaluation.
- There was a very good balance between teacher-led and student-led activity. The effective use of ice-breaker activities ensured that students understood the relevance of the content being studied.
- Ground rules for SPHE lessons were clearly established and this allowed for the seamless integration of group work and reflective activities in the lessons observed. Students displayed a commendable ability to work in collaboration with their peers and were confident communicators. A high level of mutual respect was apparent and teachers encouraged and affirmed students' contributions.
- Some notable attention was paid to enhancing literacy skills. Key words were pre-taught and deliberate efforts were made to ensure that students understood key terms. Students should be encouraged to use the relevant terms during discussions and reflective exercises to enhance fluency in their use of key terminology.
- Teachers used a variety of assessment practice during lessons. Probing questions were well used to check understanding and to challenge students to reflect on their ideas and attitudes.
- Well-planned group and individual tasks facilitated students' reflection on lesson concepts. At times, there was scope to deepen students' learning by slowing down the pace of the plenary sessions. Students should be encouraged to link the summary points from discussions back to the intended learning outcomes and to note the key points of information into their notebooks.
- A system of class folders has been established so that students file their workbooks and handouts from first year through to third year.
- The SPHE team is committed to formalising assessment in SPHE and, to date, some very good progress has been made. The team has introduced certificates of completion for the SPHE and RSE courses and students complete learning logs. Good procedures are in place to report to parents on students' progress in SPHE.

- The team is investigating ways to incorporate the assessment of project work into SPHE. It is recommended that a small number of key assessment tasks be integrated into the SPHE programmes for Junior Cycle and TY. The chosen tasks should be informed by agreed learning outcomes. Assessment criteria and descriptors should be devised for each assessment component.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- SPHE and senior cycle RSE benefit from a very good level of subject provision and whole-school support.
- Very good deployment practice is evident. A small SPHE core team has been established to plan and implement the junior cycle SPHE and senior cycle RSE programmes. There is a commendable level of commitment and collective expertise within the team.
- Senior cycle RSE is provided during Religious Education (RE) time. The SPHE teachers who have attended the relevant RSE training provide these lessons. Consideration should be given to expanding the SPHE core team by inviting the teachers of RE to avail of training in RSE to minimise timetable disruptions and build additional capacity.
- Very good levels of engagement with relevant continuing professional development (CPD) events has impacted positively on the quality of programme delivery. An analysis of teachers' CPD needs should be routinely carried out to inform future planning.
- SPHE teachers are also members of the student-care team. This practice enables clear links to be established between the taught SPHE programme, Guidance and relevant aspects of the whole-school pastoral care system.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Good-quality subject planning is apparent. Teachers are committed to providing high-quality programmes and very good reflective practice underpins the work of the team. It is particularly commendable that students' views inform programme planning. Further use of the end-of-topic review forms is encouraged.
- Good planning is evident in the junior cycle SPHE and the senior cycle RSE programme plans. The learning outcomes are clear and facilitate incremental progression. It is recommended that the junior cycle plan be enhanced to provide information on the specific resources and assessment strategies used, along with the number of classes allocated to each topic.
- The SPHE plan for TY includes a good balance in relevant areas of learning. It is recommended that learning outcomes which demonstrate clear progression from junior cycle SPHE be devised for all areas of learning included in the plan.
- An interesting range of co-curricular and cross-curricular events supports students' social and personal development during the school year. Relevant co-curricular and cross-curricular activities should be incorporated into the SPHE programme plans to ensure that the topics covered before and after these activities support students' learning.
- The mandatory whole-school policies relating to SPHE have been ratified and systematic procedures have been established for on-going policy review. Subject department procedures for the use and evaluation of guest speakers in SPHE lessons are indicative of good practice.

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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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