

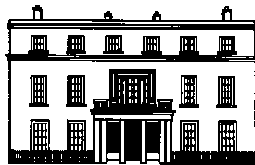
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

**De La Salle College
Waterford
Roll number: 649500**

Date of inspection: 9 February 2012



**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)

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	8 and 9 February 2012
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods of SPHE • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of relevant documents • Discussions with principal and teachers • Interaction with students 	

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning observed varied; lessons were not always based on syllabus learning outcomes and there was considerable scope for the application of experiential learning and active learning.
- Whole-school support and subject planning for SPHE and RSE are fundamentally weak.
- One period of SPHE is not provided for all class groups in junior cycle nor is a developmental course in RSE provided for all students.
- Almost all of the teachers deployed in teaching SPHE have no training and no teacher has received recent training in the delivery of senior cycle RSE.
- The school does not have an RSE policy.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The board of management should ensure full compliance with circulars M4/95, M20/96, M22/00, M37/00, M48/00, M11/03, 0027/2008, 0023/2010 and 37/2010 in making provision for SPHE and RSE on the school curriculum.
 - One lesson per week in SPHE must be provided for all junior cycle groups and a course in RSE must be provided for all class groups in the current and future school years.
 - A school policy on RSE should be developed as a matter of urgency, and links should be developed between this policy, the RSE policy, the whole-school guidance plan and the pastoral care policy.
 - Subject plans, including developmental programmes of work for RSE and SPHE, should be drawn up and subject department meetings should be initiated and held regularly.
 - Training should be urgently arranged for a team of current and potential SPHE and RSE teachers and ongoing provision should be made for continuation training.
 - The experiential learning cycle should be planned for and implemented in lessons.
 - A range of suitable resources should be sourced, accessible and inventoried.
 - Parents should be informed of students' participation and progress in SPHE and RSE.
 - Specific criteria should apply for the use of guest speakers.
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INTRODUCTION

De La Salle College provides second-level education to 1174 boys. The curriculum includes an optional transition year (TY) and the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning observed in SPHE ranged from very effective to fair. While there were a few instances of very effective practice, in almost all instances scope for development existed. There were also instances of obvious weaknesses. It was evident that teachers had no training in implementing the subject.
- The lesson topic was made clear to students at the start of each lesson. The subject matter was made relevant to their lives. Lesson structure was generally appropriate and sometimes very good but not all lessons had a clear beginning, middle and end.
- In general, students demonstrated commendable engagement. Teachers used a range of questioning strategies in lessons and students' responses were generally good. In one instance, good use was made of 'scenarios' to successfully facilitate discussion and the emergence of students' view points on the topic. It is recommended that all teachers source and use age-appropriate case studies at times in lessons, particularly those that require students to explore and justify points of view and enable them to develop their decision-making skills.
- While almost all lessons were interactive and students were participatory, students were not always sufficiently active in their learning. In a small number of instances, active learning tasks were integrated into lessons, including some well-implemented group work and one use of role play. Overall, however, this is an area for development and should be given greater consideration when planning lessons.
- Overall, there was considerable scope for the application of the experiential learning cycle as it was only used very well in a few instances. Very effective practice was noted in one lesson when students were required to process information, generalise about healthy eating and apply the knowledge gained to a challenging task that required reasoning, classification and justification of choices.
- Teachers have very good relationships with their students. Trust and respect was established and, in some instances, ground rules had been agreed. Due to the sometimes sensitive nature of discussions in SPHE and RSE, the approach recommended for lesson delivery is to have class contracts and to spend time developing and reviewing these.
- ICT was used in some lessons and provided valuable visual imagery. The considerable scope for the use of ICT should be explored and extended to all lessons.
- Guest speakers were observed in two lessons. It was clear that the guest speakers had not been familiarised with the syllabus learning outcomes and did not have an appropriate repertoire of teaching methodologies for student-centred learning. Specific criteria should apply for the deployment of guest speakers and school management and staff are directed to circular 0023/2010.
- Most classes keep a SPHE copy and some keep a folder. The extent to which students write or evaluate their learning in SPHE varied. Considerable scope exists for the development of the assessment of students' work and skills. The use of assessment strategies based on syllabus learning outcomes and in accordance with the *Teacher*

Guidelines is recommended. SPHE and RSE should be placed on school reports and parents should be provided with information about students' participation and progress.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The school does not provide SPHE on the timetable for all junior cycle groups; it is currently only provided to students in second year and those following the JCSP. This must be rectified so that SPHE is provided for one lesson per week for all students in junior cycle in accordance with circular M11/03.
- The school does not currently provide a course in RSE for all class groups in accordance with circular 0027/2008. It is the responsibility of the board of management to ensure that a RSE programme is made available to all students, even in the absence of timetabled classes. RSE must be provided in the current and future school years. Teachers of senior cycle RSE should receive training from the SPHE support service in the use of the *TRUST* resource.
- Fundamental weaknesses exist in current teacher deployment. Teachers have been deployed to SPHE without prior training or immediate arrangements for training, despite its availability locally. Almost all teachers deployed have no training in SPHE and no teacher has recent training in senior cycle RSE. Valuable expertise available within the SPHE team of teachers has not been availed of by school management which is regrettable. Efforts should be made to build and maintain a core team of interested teachers. Continuation in deployment to class groups from year to year and a gender balance on the team are desirable.
- It is strongly recommended that in addition to the current life skills module, a course in health education be provided in TY. The NCCA draft senior cycle SPHE syllabus would be beneficial in planning for this.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- In most instances, there was considerable scope for development in lesson planning. It was not always evident that lessons were planned in line with the syllabus and most teachers tended to rely on the text book to deliver lesson structure and content. The syllabus, *Guidelines* and *Teacher Handbook* should be used in planning. Lessons should be prepared using learning outcomes which should be shared with students and used to consolidate learning. The experiential learning cycle, with its four phases of experiencing, processing, generalising and applying, should be included in lesson design.
- SPHE department meetings do not currently take place and teachers were unaware of the identity of other SPHE teachers. Teachers plan lessons individually and there is no collaborative planning or subject plan for SPHE.
- SPHE and RSE subject departments should be formed and meetings initiated with records kept of decision and actions. To facilitate development, a subject co-ordinator should be selected on a rotational basis from the team.
- The school ought to have a policy on RSE and this should be urgently developed in accordance with the aforementioned Department circulars.
- There is currently no programme for RSE. This should be developed using the *Interim Guidelines for RSE*.

- Subject plans, including programmes of work for RSE and SPHE, should be drawn up; these should be designed in a framework that integrates learning outcomes, teaching methodologies, resources and assessment. Subject plans should outline yearly learning outcomes for the incremental acquisition of skills, knowledge and attitude.
- The school's anti-bullying policy should be reviewed to take account of homophobic bullying and links should be developed between this policy, the RSE policy, the whole-school guidance plan and the pastoral care policy. Planning and policy making should facilitate consultation with student and parents. Planning should also be informed by guidelines for schools from GLEN (Gay and Lesbian Equality Network).
- A range of suitable resources should be sourced, accessible and inventoried. Resources, comprehensive lesson plans and suggested activities are available to download at www.sphe.ie to support the implementation of programmes of work.

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

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