

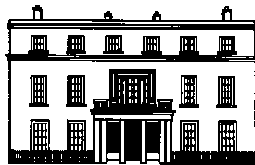
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

**Christian Brothers Secondary School
Westland Row, Dublin 2
Roll number: 60490J**

Date of inspection: 2 December 2011



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

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SPHE**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date(s) of inspection	23 rd November and 1 st and 2 nd December
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 high, with many examples of exemplary practice.
- Lessons were well structured and paced and the topics afforded students the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion.
- The methodologies used supported active student engagement with experiential learning.
- The strong ethos of care in the school facilitates the effective delivery of SPHE in the classroom.
- The links fostered with relevant agencies serve to consolidate the work completed in the SPHE lessons.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should progress their subject planning to ensure that current practices in relation to the delivery of SPHE and RSE are clearly documented and that the relevant policies are prioritised for completion and ratification.
 - When developing their schemes of work teachers should ensure that they are set out in such a way as to facilitate effective review and development.
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INTRODUCTION

Christian Brothers, Westland Row is a co-educational voluntary secondary school in inner-city Dublin. The school has 131 students and participates in the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) scheme. It also has very strong links with the external agencies working with young people in the local community.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- High quality teaching and learning was observed in all lessons with many examples of exemplary practice in affording students opportunities to engage in meaningful experiential learning.
- Teacher preparedness for all of the lessons observed contributed to good lesson structure and pace. The lesson plan was communicated to the students and this is good practice. However, to optimise the benefits of making students aware of their role in the learning process, teachers should articulate the plan in terms of the proposed learning outcome.
- The range of methodologies observed was used to very good effect. Question and answer sessions were successful in engaging the students and resulted in good levels of reflection and discussion. In some instances greater use of higher-order questions is recommended to encourage students to consider why they respond in the way they do.
- ICT was effectively used in all lessons to support the work in hand. In one instance, it enabled students to consolidate their understanding of the topic in hand while in others it served as a visual support when introducing the topic or assigning student tasks.
- Pair and group work were used in most lessons fostering active and meaningful student engagement. The tasks assigned were short and focused and students worked very purposefully. It is recommended that all lessons incorporate at least one interactive student task to further active learning.
- In one lesson, where bullying was the topic of discussion, students were referred to the anti-bullying code in their school journals, thereby linking the lesson with their daily lives in the school. Reference to the anti-bullying posters designed by the students served to affirm their talents and effort.
- Worksheets were used in all lessons to support learning. Some students also completed a personal reflection task which was then transferred to their SPHE folders. However, given the nature of SPHE and the subsequent difficulty in assigning traditional homework exercises, teachers should put in place a common assessment policy to ascertain whether or not the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. To this end the use of a personal reflection log or a template reflecting what the students have completed and learnt from the lesson should be considered. The personal reflection log could be kept by the teacher and returned to the students at a later date in the form of a memory box.
- All students were very well behaved and engaged productively with the work of the lesson. Their responses were well thought out and indicated good understanding of the lesson content. The positive rapport between teachers and students fostered a classroom environment that facilitated a willingness to engage in open interaction. Of particular note was the focus on experiential learning in some lessons where students engaged on a very personal level with sensitive topics.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The ethos of care which underpins a meaningful SPHE programme permeates all aspects of school life.
- Senior management and teachers work effectively with a range of agencies, in particular the local St Andrews Resource Centre to ensure that the learning outcomes central to the SPHE modules are consolidated in the after-school programmes offered to students. The range of initiatives afforded to students through this partnership approach indicates the active concern of both the school and the agencies for the educational and personal welfare of the students.
- Senior management also uses the expertise of those working in the resource centre to support the effective delivery of the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) modules as part of the junior cycle SPHE programme. RSE is delivered in senior cycle through the religious education programme.
- The welcoming atmosphere in the school is supported by the range of art displays on the corridors and SPHE relevant posters in the classrooms. This serves to affirm students' work and promote their self-confidence.
- Teachers have access to a good range of resources and have also engaged in a range of in-school professional development seminars relevant to the delivery of SPHE. Some have also attended SPHE specific courses. It is recommended that all teachers avail of SPHE specific in-service to further the very good work observed during the evaluation.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject planning for SPHE is ongoing and the school principal is currently the subject co-ordinator. This is due to the fact that all those involved in the delivery of SPHE are co-ordinators for their main teaching subjects. Given this difficulty it is recommended that the members of the SPHE department work together to co-ordinate subject planning for SPHE as this will afford them greater ownership of the subject planning process.
 - Whole-school policies for SPHE and RSE, which are currently in draft form, should be progressed to ratification as a matter of priority.
 - All members of the SPHE department have comprehensive resource folders. To ensure consistency in the delivery of the programme and to afford other teachers the opportunity to teach the subject teachers should integrate their individual subject plans into a single document articulating the global learning outcomes for each year group and the systems in place to support the effective delivery of RSE as part of the SPHE programme. Schemes of work should be developed in terms of the topic, the learning outcome, the proposed methodologies, the resources and the assessment protocols. They should also include a space for comment on the success or otherwise of work completed for the purpose of ongoing review and self-evaluation. This approach has already been adopted by some teachers.
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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 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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