Subject Inspection of Social, Personal & Health Education 
REPORT

Mannix College
Charleville, County Cork
Roll number: 71080B

Date of inspection: 13 May 2011
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN
SOCIAL, PERSONAL & HEALTH EDUCATION (SPHE)
INCLUDING RELATIONSHIPS SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE)

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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<th>Dates of inspection</th>
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<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
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<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Observation of teaching and learning during two class periods</td>
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<td>• Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
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MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in SPHE is excellent, with the subject department demonstrating high levels of expertise and skill in the use of the recommended methods.
- Careful consideration was given, both at lesson design and delivery stages, to the individual needs of learners.
- There was a clear emphasis on the introduction and explanation of new vocabulary, thus supporting the development of students’ literacy levels.
- SPHE is timetabled for all junior cycle students and, in accordance with best practice, junior cycle RSE is delivered as a module within SPHE.
- Care for the well being of students provides a supportive environment for SPHE.
- Planning and preparation, both at subject department level and for lessons, are of a very high quality.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- In depth consideration ought to be given to the extent to which the school’s senior cycle RSE programme addresses the themes identified in the *RSE Interim curriculum and guidelines for post-primary schools*.
- Management and staff should revisit the RSE policy in light of the suggestions provided in this report. The development of a visiting speaker policy should also be considered.
- Teachers should explore the use of additional assessment strategies based on learning outcomes identified in syllabus modules. The introduction of portfolio assessment is also recommended.
INTRODUCTION

Mannix College is a co-educational vocational school under the auspices of County Cork Vocational Educational Committee (VEC). It has a current enrolment of seventy-three mainstream students, and caters for twenty-nine post-leaving certificate (PLC) students. Students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) constitute one fifth of current enrolment. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department’s action plan for educational inclusion.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

• The quality of teaching and learning in SPHE is excellent.
• Lessons were purposeful. The lesson plan was shared with students at the outset. This included a very commendable identification of the relevant module and topic, as well as the associated intended learning outcomes.
• A range of carefully chosen resources was well utilised to support students’ participation, understanding and learning. These included; specially prepared PowerPoint presentations, DVD clips, and worksheets.
• Careful consideration was given, both at lesson design and delivery stage, to the individual needs of learners. For example, many of the resources had a strong visual emphasis, which supported the inclusion, understanding and learning of EAL students.
• There was a clear emphasis on the introduction and explanation of new vocabulary, thereby supporting the development of students’ literacy levels. The recording of students’ contributions on a flipchart, as part of brainstorming sessions, was valuable in this regard.
• High levels of expertise and skill were evident in the use of the methods most suited to the teaching of SPHE. There was very good provision made for the inclusion of the four phases of the experiential learning cycle. As a result, lessons were highly student-centred, with opportunities for meaningful student engagement and learning.
• Pair and group activities were well planned, organised and managed. Students’ participation was carefully monitored, with guidance and support being offered as required. Student groups were also carefully constructed, with a view to supporting a level of peer mentoring.
• Questioning was effectively used. Questions posed to students were well thought out in advance of each lesson, thereby ensuring that the learning potential of each activity was fully exploited. Many of the questions that students were asked required them to think critically and to formulate opinions. This is highly praised.
• Staff-student relations were very positive. Students’ contributions, which were of good quality and often very mature, were encouraged and appropriately affirmed. Students were impeccably well behaved, which indicated both appreciation and respect.
• It was good to note that lesson content was summarised with reference to previously identified learning outcomes, although it is suggested that there was some scope for involving students more in this part of all lessons.
**SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- SPHE is timetabled for all junior cycle students, and, in accordance with best practice, RSE is delivered as a module within the school’s SPHE programme.

- In senior cycle, aspects of the suggested RSE programme are delivered as part of the school’s religious education programme, with some involvement too of guest speakers. In the next planned review of the RSE element of this programme, consideration ought to be given to the extent to which the three themes identified in the *RSE Interim curriculum and guidelines for post-primary schools* are being addressed.

- The development of a visiting speaker policy is proposed for consideration. All concerned are directed to *Circular 0023/2010 - SPHE and RSE: Best Practice Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools*.

- The board has ratified an RSE policy, which partly reflects the sample provided by the Department of Education and Skills. In the next review of this policy four suggestions are offered: revisit the template for further consideration of areas for inclusion, with particular attention to the withdrawal of students from RSE classes; introduce school-specific detail and information as relevant; provide ratification and proposed review dates; and append the RSE programme for each year group to the policy.

- Deployment patterns in relation to SPHE are very good. It is positive that both the SPHE department and the whole-staff have engaged with the SPHE Support Service and, thereby, have received relevant training or input.

- It is clear that care for the well being of students generally is a priority in the school, and this provides a supportive environment for SPHE. The work of the School Completion Programme (SCP) project worker is recognised in the school as making a very valuable contribution to the school’s efforts to provide for students social, personal and health education, in the very broadest sense of the word.

- Communication with parents in relation to SPHE is quite well developed. This can be seen, for example, in a series of parent/student leaflets prepared by the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) local committee.

**PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- There are very good quality outcomes linked to the planning work of the SPHE subject department. A comprehensive subject plan has been prepared, as well as very detailed programmes of work for each year group. Review is both ongoing and thorough. With an emphasis on the learning outcomes identified in the syllabus, consideration ought to be given to planning for the introduction of strategies intended to evaluate student learning on a module-by-module basis.

- Planning for lessons observed was of a very high quality.

- SPHE is well resourced. A recently installed data projector should facilitate greater use of information communication technology (ICT) based resources.

- Students are required to maintain well-organised subject files, which are regularly monitored. This would provide a very good basis for the introduction of portfolio assessment, which is recommended. It is positive that review-of-topic forms are completed with students on occasion. This is further encouraged as is the use of
additional assessment strategies based on the learning outcomes identified in syllabus modules.

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 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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