

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Roscommon Community School
Lisnamult, Roscommon
Roll number: 72290R**

Date of inspection: 26 September 2011



A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	26 September 2011
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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in SPHE is good, with elements of excellent practice observed.
- A wide range of teaching resources was utilised well in lessons and elements of assessment were incorporated into lessons.
- Students were engaged in their learning.
- Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) as outlined in the *Interim Curriculum Guidelines* is currently not being delivered in senior cycle.
- Management is committed to supporting the continued up-skilling of teachers as necessary.
- Subject department planning is very well advanced.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The development of students' skills of reflection through portfolio work should be explored over time.
 - A coherent senior-cycle RSE programme should be developed and delivered in accordance with Circular 37/10.
 - The school's existing RSE policy should be reviewed and expanded.
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INTRODUCTION

Roscommon Community College is run under the auspices of County Roscommon Vocational Educational Committee (VEC). The school is one of three providers of post-primary education in Roscommon Town. In the current school year, the mainstream enrolment stands at 144 students. 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 good, with some excellent facilitation of experiential learning observed.
- Lessons were well structured and paced and the content was appropriate to students' needs and interests.
- The good practice of sharing the learning outcomes with students at the beginning of lessons was observed. However, these should always be returned to at the lesson closure.
- A variety of effective teaching and learning strategies was used such as brainstorming, discussion, pair work and group work. Some further refinement of the skills associated with group work is necessary. There was scope to improve the quality of students' learning through the use of more strategies for differentiation.
- Best practice was observed where the teacher acted as a facilitator of learning where, for example, students were encouraged to consider and to analyse and synthesise issues during activity-based learning. This practice assists students in developing higher-order thinking skills and should be further utilised.
- A wide range of relevant teaching resources, including teacher-generated materials, was utilised well in lessons. Information and communication technology (ICT) was used in all lessons but predominantly as a presentation tool rather than as a learning tool. There is scope to improve students' engagement with ICT as an interactive learning tool.
- The atmosphere in lessons was positive, conducive to learning and was marked by good interpersonal relationships between teachers and students. Students were engaged in their learning.
- Good practice was evident in the identification of key words in some lessons. As part of the planning process teachers should reflect on classroom practices and plan for the implementation of a greater range of strategies to enhance students' literacy development in terms of the standard of writing and the quality and presentation of their work.
- Interactions with students indicated that they had a good knowledge and understanding of the concepts related to the various topics under study, commensurate with their ability.
- Elements of assessment were incorporated into lessons mainly through questioning and through the completion of some activities. The process of assessment should be further developed to ensure that there is an agreed and consistent approach to determine students' engagement and learning.
- In order to further develop the skills of reflection, students should compose short reflections on their work and undertake end-of-module reviews. The potential for students to use the materials and reflections in their SPHE folder as the basis for the development of a reflective portfolio should be explored.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good whole-school support for SPHE. The school is proactive in promoting students' well being and whole-school initiatives such as the guidance service, and programmes such as 'Schools for Health in Ireland', the 'Get Smart Programme' as well as the 'Copping on Programme' support students well.
- The SPHE programme, including RSE, is provided for all junior cycle students in accordance with the requirements of Circular M11/03.
- While visiting speakers deliver some talks to students on a variety of health-related topics in senior cycle, RSE as outlined in the *Interim Curriculum Guidelines* is currently not being delivered in senior cycle. The school plans to introduce senior cycle SPHE in the next academic year. This should address the issue regarding the placement of RSE in senior cycle, including TY. A coherent senior-cycle RSE programme should be developed and delivered in accordance with Circular 37/10.
- The existing RSE policy should be reviewed and expanded to ensure that it provides clear guidance to parents, students, and teachers on how all aspects of the programme are delivered, including the proposed delivery of SPHE and RSE at senior cycle.
- On occasion, visiting speakers are invited to the school to supplement SPHE and RSE classes. It is good to note that a policy for visiting speakers has been developed in line with Circular 23/10.
- Management is committed to supporting the continued up-skilling of teachers. Whole-staff in-service has been provided in some SPHE-related topics. All SPHE teachers have availed of the two-day introductory training in addition to other relevant in-service courses. Management should ensure that teachers continue to avail of RSE training for both junior cycle and senior cycle. This will be essential for the planned introduction of senior cycle SPHE.
- The school informs parents of students' progress through school reports four times a year, and annual parent-teacher meetings.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning for programme organisation is very good, with a comprehensive SPHE subject plan developed by the co-ordinator. Subject planning is ongoing and detailed schemes of work have been developed for each year group. These include time frames for the teaching of topics; the learning outcomes to be attained; the corresponding methodologies and resources and agreed assessment modes. Plans also include a review section for comments on the achievement of the learning objectives and this facilitates regular review and informs future planning.
- Planning and preparation for all lessons was very good. A central storage area for SPHE materials that houses a large collection of SPHE resources is accessible to all teachers.
- The role of SPHE co-ordinator rotates and should be defined for clarity.
- There are regular SPHE team meetings. Minutes of these meetings should be maintained. As part of the planning process, teachers should formalise the sharing of professional

expertise, in terms of subject knowledge, methodologies for experiential learning and assessment of SPHE.

- There is great support in the school for cross-curricular and co-curricular SPHE activities.
- The school's procedures for regular review of SPHE provision includes obtaining the views of students, teachers and parents and this leads to goal setting. The next step for the team is the development and implementation of action plans that include performance indicators that are designed to appraise progress in achieving these goals.

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 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.