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

The Teresian School
Donnybrook, Dublin 4
Roll number: 60892G

Date of inspection: 15 November 2011
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SPHE

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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<th>10, 11 and 15 November 2011</th>
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<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods</td>
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<td>• Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
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MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good with some examples of excellent practice.
- All lessons were well structured and there was a good balance between teacher instruction and student activity.
- A range of methodologies was used which resulted in good student engagement with the work in hand.
- Very good work has been completed in subject planning to date.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should have at least one pair or group activity in every lesson in order to afford students the opportunity to engage in the experiential learning which is central to SPHE.
- The current timetabling difficulties should be addressed in future years to ensure that all students will have access to one period of SPHE each week in junior cycle.
- As part of further subject planning teachers should develop an assessment protocol which will enable them to evaluate student progress and to further enhance their own self-evaluation practices.
INTRODUCTION

The Teresian School is a voluntary secondary school with a student enrolment of 228 female students. It is a fee-paying school serving an urban catchment in south County Dublin. Classes are mixed-ability.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- All lessons were well structured and paced. The content was in line with syllabus requirements and responded well to the students’ needs and experiences. Furthermore, the incremental approach to the study of the different modules as outlined in the SPHE programme was evident in the lessons observed.

- The lesson topic was introduced in all instances. In one instance, it was articulated as a learning outcome, which is very good practice. This approach should be extended to all lessons thereby engaging the students and giving them some responsibility for their own learning.

- Question and answer sessions were used in all lessons. The appropriate mix of higher-order and lower-order questions resulted in good levels of reflection by students. In some instances however, there was a need to direct questions at some of the quieter students to ensure their full participation in the lesson.

- Information and communications technology (ICT) was used in one lesson to support teaching and learning. All teachers should keep in mind the benefits of ICT and use it as an additional resource where appropriate to enhance the work of the lesson.

- All lessons included a range of student-based tasks with some good choice of worksheets. Where group work activities were assigned, they were short and focused in line with good practice. The use of pair or group work tasks is central to the SPHE programme which emphasises the experiential nature of learning. It is thus recommended that there is at least one pair or group activity in every lesson. Consideration should also be given to the use of role-play as an activity. To maximise the benefits of experiential learning activities students should be reminded of their class charter prior to the task. This charter should, where possible, be displayed in all relevant classrooms for the purpose of reminding students of agreed behaviour in the SPHE lesson.

- Students engaged actively with the work in hand and made some very good contributions to the lesson. Learning was well consolidated at the end of each lesson where students were encouraged to think about how they felt in relation to the topic or to what they had learnt in the lesson.

- Assessment practices included the use of student workbooks or individual evaluation sheets. Good practice was noted in one lesson where the teacher asked students to identify what they had learnt, reflect on what they had contributed to the lesson and what they had taken away from the lesson for their own personal development. It is recommended that students keep a diary in which in which they would keep their own personal work.
SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

• The underlying principles outlined in the school’s mission statement are well placed to support the implementation of an effective SPHE programme.

• Current timetabling difficulties have resulted in the insufficient allocation of time for SPHE in first year. School management is endeavouring to overcome this timetabling deficit as all students are required to have at least one period of SPHE per week in each year of junior cycle. However, the SPHE department is commended for collaborating with other relevant subject areas such as Home Economics and Physical Education to ensure that all modules are completed on a cross curricular basis by the end of the academic year.

• Classrooms are student-based, which limits the provision of a subject-specific environment. However there is an SPHE notice-board on the corridor for the display of subject-related information. This is good practice. There is also good access to resources.

• All school policies relevant to SPHE are in place. However some of the good practices that have evolved to deal with bullying are not documented in the school’s anti-bullying policy. Consideration should also be given to furthering the implementation of restorative practices as a prior intervention to suspension and documenting them in the policy. The provision of counselling support for students who are involved in bullying and those being bullied is good practice.

• Practices in relation to informing parents about the SPHE and RSE programmes are very good.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

• School management has worked in recent years to build up capacity within the SPHE department and this has resulted in the establishment of a vibrant subject department. It is recommended that, whenever possible, the position of subject co-coordinator be rotated to share the workload in addition to affording all members of the department the opportunity to further their subject specific expertise.

• Minutes are kept of all meetings and these indicated a good balance between strategic planning and issues of a practical nature.

• The SPHE plans and schemes of work are well laid out, with clear aims and learning outcomes for the different modules. The methodologies proposed for the implementation of the programme are also outlined. To further build on this very good work, teachers should develop and document protocols for assessing students’ work and evaluating overall progress.

• An outline plan has been developed to support the implementation of the RSE policy in senior cycle. It is recommended that the teachers involved in the delivery of RSE build on this plan using a similar template to the current SPHE plan.

• There was very good individual preparation for all of the lessons observed.
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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.
Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

A plan for the delivery of Senior Cycle RSE is fully in place and has been in use for the last three years. However, it is prepared in a different format to that of Junior Cycle RSE.

At the moment the Senior Plan is being drafted now according to the JC template as suggested at the SPHE inspection.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

In order to supplement the hours allocated to SPHE in 1st Year it has been decided to deliver the RSE part of the Programme in a cross-curricular manner and to include it as part of the Religious Education Programme for First Year. The other Years have the full quota of classes delivered each week of the year.

The SPHE team are taking on board the development of an assessment protocol as part of their subject planning to evaluate student practices and to enhance their own self-evaluation.

Many thanks for a valuable inspection.