

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

Scoil Mhuire
Ennistymon, County Clare
Roll number: 61950W

Date of inspection: 9 November 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

Date of inspection	9 November 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 and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning of a very high quality was evident in all of the lessons observed.
- Numerous examples of the very good use of experiential learning were noted.
- The ongoing assessment of student progress in SPHE was integrated into lesson delivery.
- The school has a long tradition of supporting its students through health education and pastoral-care structures, in line with the school's ethos.
- There is very good whole-school support for the organisation, teaching and learning of SPHE.
- The quality of planning for programme organisation is very good and demonstrates a commitment to self-evaluation and review.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Practices and procedures in relation to assessment in SPHE should be further explored with a view to formalising practice in the area.
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INTRODUCTION

Scoil Mhuire, Convent of Mercy, Ennistymon, is a long-established all-girls voluntary secondary school with a strong Christian ethos under the trusteeship of Catholic Education an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). The school is one of three providers of post-primary education in Ennistymon. The current enrolment stands at 290 students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching and learning of a very high quality was evident in all of the lessons observed. Lessons were well structured and sequenced, and delivered at a pace that allowed students time to engage with and reflect on the key concepts of the lessons.
- Numerous examples of the very good use of experiential learning were noted and students were carefully guided through the required steps of experiencing, processing, generalising and applying their learning. In particular the use of learning logs, as observed in some lessons, supported the completion of the experiential learning cycle very well.
- Lessons were planned to serve specific learning outcomes which were shared at the beginning of lessons and returned to at the lesson closure.
- Teachers demonstrated very good subject knowledge and sensitivity in the delivery of subject content for SPHE.
- Teachers make very good use of a wide range of relevant teaching resources, including information and communication technology (ICT) in planning, and to enhance teaching and consolidate learning. This reflects well the school's current participation in an ongoing Learning School project with a focus on ICT with Limerick Education Centre.
- Some very good examples of the use of active learning methodologies, such as the use of brainstorming, discussion, games, reflection, pair work and group work, were evident in the lessons observed.
- Students' behaviour was exemplary in all lessons. A strong pastoral approach was evident in the management of classes that resulted in positive interactions between teachers and students and an atmosphere that was conducive to learning. Students were fully engaged and the work rate was high in all the lessons observed.
- Students worked well both individually and collaboratively and demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of the concepts related to the various topics, appropriate to their level. This was evident from their answers to questions, class discussions, and the completion of tasks. Students' workbooks indicated good progression in their work.
- The ongoing assessment of student progress in SPHE was integrated into lesson delivery. This was achieved mainly through oral questioning, written exercises, discussions, monitoring of workbooks, and assessment of tasks. In order to enhance current practices, assessment in SPHE could be further developed through the use of learning logs, short projects, portfolio work, end-of-module reviews and other forms of student reflection. Teachers should also agree on the criteria to be used for assessing students' progress in SPHE.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The school's philosophy recognises the uniqueness of each student with a focus on a broad-based approach to education. A strong network of supports is designed to carefully target student welfare. There is very good collaboration between the SPHE team, the year heads, the mentors, the guidance counsellor, and the Religious Education (RE) team, in supporting the needs of students.
- Whole-school initiatives, such as the buddy system, the mentoring programme, extracurricular activities, and various school policies support the SPHE programme well.
- There is very good whole-school support for the organisation, teaching and learning of SPHE. Good timetable provision is made for SPHE at junior cycle. The Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme is provided as an integral part of junior cycle SPHE and is delivered in the context of RE at senior cycle. Health education has been delivered to TY students in the past and may be reintroduced as resources permit.
- In keeping with best practice, a core team is involved in SPHE delivery and they display a high level of commitment. The role of SPHE co-ordinator is undertaken by the guidance counsellor who has wide-ranging experience in teaching SPHE.
- It is impressive that all SPHE teachers have availed of the two-day introductory training in addition to other specialised in-service courses. Whole-staff in-service has also been provided in a range of health-related topics such as drug awareness, anti-bullying and A Restorative Justice Approach to School Discipline.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The SPHE team engages in collaborative planning both on a formal and informal basis and very good progress has been made in developing a subject plan. The teachers develop detailed schemes of work annually for each year group. These include the learning outcomes to be attained as well as the corresponding methodologies and teaching resources. Plans also include a review section for comments on the achievement of the learning objectives and this informs future planning.
- Senior-cycle RSE programme plans are well developed and include timeframes for the delivery of topics.
- In the context of ongoing subject planning, schemes of work should be further developed to include more specific information with regard to delivery time frames and agreed assessment procedures.
- Practices and procedures in relation to assessment in SPHE should be formalised in line with the school's policies for homework and assessment.
- There was evidence of very good individual lesson planning and preparation, tailored for individual class groups. These were appropriately based on the school's agreed SPHE programme.
- A range of whole-school policies that support the SPHE programme is in place and is currently under review.

- The SPHE team has shown considerable capacity for self-evaluation and improvement. In addition to maintaining records of work completed in individual teacher's schemes of work there was evidence of self-evaluation and of reflection on the teaching and the student learning achieved.
 - Annual review of the school's SPHE provision takes place leading to goal setting. Students' views inform this process in an informal way. More formal evaluations to include the views of students, teachers and parents would enhance this process. The team is committed to the development and implementation of action plans, including performance indicators, designed to appraise progress in achieving the team's short-term and long-term developmental priorities.
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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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.