

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

**Scoil na mBráithre
Dungarvan, County Waterford
Roll number: 64880T**

Date of inspection: 24 March 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	24 March 2011
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teacher• Interaction with students• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teacher• Administration of questionnaires to twenty-eight third-year students.• Focused interview with six senior students

MAIN FINDINGS

- There was a high quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed.
- Students' were actively engaged in their lessons through a range of well constructed and progressive tasks.
- Lessons were characterised by a positive and affirming rapport between students and their teacher.
- SPHE is appropriately timetabled. A Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme is not provided at senior cycle.
- Planning is well developed and a comprehensive SPHE subject plan is in place.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- A systematic approach to the assessment of students' learning and progress should be developed and implemented, with a comment on students' progress included on the formal reports to parents.
 - A RSE policy should be developed and ratified to support the implementation of a comprehensive senior cycle programme.
 - Consideration should be given to increasing the professional capacity to deliver the programmes by inviting additional members of the teaching staff to teach the subject.
-

INTRODUCTION

Scoil na mBráithre, Dungarvan, is a voluntary secondary school for boys with 277 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY) programme and established Leaving Certificate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good.
- Lessons were well planned, structured and paced. This helped to ensure that students were actively engaged throughout and good progress was made in developing their understanding of the topics and key concepts.
- The content of the lessons was clearly signposted for students at the outset and ensured they understood the purpose and direction of the lesson and the relevance of the topic. The topics studied were appropriate to the age and ability of students, were clearly contextualised and relevant to students' present stage of development.
- A good balance was achieved between the level of teacher input and student activity. Students were actively engaged in a series of well structured, focused and progressive tasks. Self-reflective tasks were very well organised. Students particularly enjoyed the opportunity to present and explain their work to their peers during the processing phase of one lesson on emotional health. Where appropriate, consideration should be given to providing additional opportunities for focused pair work or work in small groups to increase opportunities for students to share their experiences and to learn from each other.
- A range of open and targeted questions was effectively used to engage students and to differentiate for ability. A good blend of higher-order and recall questions, along with sufficient wait time, prompting and probing ensured that responding students' experienced a high degree of success and affirmation.
- A common feature of lessons was students' ability to use appropriate terminology and to express their opinions openly and confidently. This is a credit to the climate of respect established in the SPHE lessons observed.
- The high quality of classroom management ensured that learning occurred in a positive productive environment. Oral feedback to students was affirming and provided them with guidance and a focus for their continued engagement and learning.
- The recent introduction of a student workbook has helped to provide a mechanism to record elements of their learning through the completion of assignments. However, the assessment process is an area for further improvement and a systematic approach should be developed and implemented. This should include a number of key milestones for each year group based on the identified learning outcomes and involving a number of modes of assessment.
- Resources selected to support students' learning were of a high quality. In addition to worksheets and the textbook, information and communications technology (ICT) was effectively used to teach elements of personal safety, while the careful selection of a relevant piece of background music contributed positively to the atmosphere in another lesson.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- SPHE is appropriately timetabled for all class groups in accordance with Circular Letter M11/03. RSE is embedded in the SPHE programme at junior cycle and is appropriately delivered.
- Elements of RSE are discussed and included as part of the senior cycle biology and religious education programmes. However, the current approach lacks depth and coherency in its planning and delivery. Management should ensure that a RSE programme is developed and implemented for senior cycle students in accordance with Circular Letter 0027/08. A RSE policy should be developed and ratified to support the delivery of this programme for all year groups.
- With the exception of RSE, policies relevant to SPHE have been developed by the school.
- Students interviewed and surveyed as part of the evaluation stated they valued the subject and appreciated the opportunities to discuss issues relevant to their personal development. Senior students stated they would like to continue to have opportunities to formally discuss relationships, substance abuse and mental health issues, particularly as they begin to encounter challenging situations while they mature into adulthood.
- Responsibility for the delivery of the SPHE programme currently rests with one teacher, who has a very strong interest, knowledge of and commitment to the subject and to student welfare. Very good attention has been given to engagement in continuous professional development (CPD). The development of a core SPHE team should be considered by management to further strengthen the professional capacity to deliver the SPHE and RSE programmes from within staff.
- The general classrooms visited were suitable to accommodate the range of interactive methods used to provide meaningful learning experiences for students. Appropriate arrangements are in place to support the purchase of additional resources, when required.
- The arrangements to meet with first-year parents during the first term in the school is very good practice to familiarise parents with the purpose and content of the SPHE programme. The availability of the SPHE teacher at parent-teacher meetings is also welcomed.
- A formative comment on students' progress should be included on the formal school reports to parents. This should occur once the assessment process has been further developed.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning for the organisation and delivery of the SPHE programme is well advanced and a detailed subject plan for SPHE has been developed.
- The subject plan outlines a coherent and balanced approach to the delivery of the programmes of work for each year group.
- The programmes of work for each year group are in line with the recommendations outlined in the *Guidelines for Teachers*. Of particular note is the organisation of a trip to an outdoor education centre as part of the belonging and integration module to support first-year students with their transition into the school. The expansion of the programmes of work to provide a reference framework for the delivery of each module and topic is recommended. This should aim to align the key learning outcomes for each year group with the relevant learning experiences and modes of assessment.

- A good range of resources has been developed and collated to support the delivery of the subject.
 - Some review of the effectiveness of the programme is undertaken. The further development of this process should be considered as part of the self-evaluation process.
-

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and teacher 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 evaluation; a response was not received from the board.