

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Coláiste an Chreagáin**  
**Mountbellew, County Galway**  
**Roll number: 71290M**

**Date of inspection: 4 October 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)**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	4 October 2011
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The standard of teaching and learning was very good in the SPHE lessons, with some excellent practice observed.
- The success factors in the planning and delivery of SPHE are, firstly, the positive whole-school support for SPHE; secondly, the effective leadership provided by the principal, thirdly, the commitment of the co-ordinator and SPHE teachers; and fourthly, involvement in ongoing training.
- The atmosphere in lessons was positive, conducive to learning, and marked by good interpersonal relations between teachers and students.
- A combination of assessment modes is used to assess students' competence and progress and there is scope to further develop these.
- There are various student-support structures which provide a cohesive and strong network of supports for students.
- Subject planning for SPHE is well developed and ongoing.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Practices and procedures in relation to assessment in SPHE should be further developed and formalised.
  - The existing Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy should be reviewed and expanded.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Coláiste an Chreagáin is a co-educational and non-denominational school which operates under the auspices of County Galway Vocational Educational Committee (VEC). The school is one of two providers of post-primary education in the town of Mountbellew. The Transition Year programme is currently not available at the school.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The standard of teaching and learning was very good in the SPHE lessons, with some excellent practice observed.
- Very good teaching was characterised by very good planning, the use of stimulating and appropriate teaching resources, and clear learning outcomes communicated to the students at the beginning of lessons and assessed at the end.
- Teachers make very good use of information and communication technology (ICT) in planning and to enhance teaching and to consolidate learning.
- In most of the lessons observed there was a good mix of activities including opportunities for students to actively engage with lesson content. This worked best where the teacher's approach provided opportunities for co-operative learning and pair work and facilitated group work and discussion.
- Best practice was observed where the teacher acted as a facilitator of learning where, for example, students were encouraged to consider, analyse and synthesise issues during activity-based learning. This practice assists students in developing higher-order thinking skills and should be further utilised.
- Students were well managed in all learning activities and their work was monitored by teachers in a supportive and caring manner. The positive student-teacher relationships and the warm and enthusiastic manner in which the teachers interact with the students have a positive effect on classroom atmosphere and reflected well the student-centred ethos permeating the school.
- There is evidence of very good collaboration between SPHE personnel and the learning-support personnel to facilitate a focused and strategic approach to supporting students with additional educational needs.
- Classroom management was effective and students demonstrated very good behaviour and were fully engaged in their learning. First year SPHE students demonstrated great pride in their class anthem which is a friendship song.
- 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.
- Students' folders and copybooks indicated good progression of work. Students undertake end-of-module reviews in junior cycle SPHE.
- A variety of assessment modes is used to assess students' competence and progress. There were some examples of peer and self-assessment observed. In order to enhance current practices, the SPHE team should further explore the area of assessment in

SPHE. In particular, the development of reflection skills through portfolio work should be further developed and assessed. Teachers should also agree on the criteria to be used for assessing students' progress in SPHE.

### **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- The SPHE programme is embedded in the pastoral care provision at the school. There is very good collaboration between the SPHE team and senior management, class tutors, mentors, guidance personnel, and parents in planning for the needs of all students. Whole-school initiatives, such as the Cool Schools programme, the Friendship Week and the mentoring programme supplement the SPHE programme well.
- There is very good whole-school support for SPHE. The SPHE programme, including RSE is provided for all junior cycle students, in accordance with the requirements of CL M11/03. The RSE programme is currently delivered in the context of Religious Education (RE) at senior cycle. An SPHE programme has been delivered to senior cycle students in the past and the school has plans to reintroduce it as soon as resources permit.
- 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 at senior cycle.
- The school's engagement with SPHE-related training is impressive and includes great commitment from the principal and deputy principal who have both availed of training. Whole-staff in-service has also been provided in a range of SPHE-related topics. A register of training needs and training undertaken should be maintained. 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 reintroduction of senior cycle SPHE.
- The role of visiting speakers who are invited to supplement SPHE and RSE classes is clear. Such inputs are carefully planned for and evaluated. The school should now formally document these procedures as outlined in circular 0023/10.
- The school informs parents of students' progress in SPHE on a regular basis through school reports, school journal and letters. There are plans to increase the profile of SPHE in the context of annual parent-teacher meetings.

### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject planning is very good and detailed schemes of work have been developed by the co-ordinator for each year group. These include time frames for the teaching of topics; the learning outcomes to be attained; the corresponding methodologies, and resources. Plans also include a review section for comments on the achievement of the learning objectives and this facilitates regular review and informs future planning.
- Senior-cycle RSE programme plans are well developed.

- Planning for assessment of students' learning in SPHE is a work in progress. In the context of further developing the assessment sections of the schemes of work, the sharing of best practice in relation to the various forms of assessment currently utilised by teachers, and particularly assessment for learning, is recommended.
- There was evidence of good individual lesson planning and preparation, tailored for individual class groups. These were appropriately based on the school's agreed SPHE programme.
- As the SPHE co-ordinator is newly appointed; the role of co-ordinator should be agreed and documented.
- The SPHE team has demonstrated capacity for self-evaluation and improvement. Provision should be made for the regular review of SPHE provision to comprise the views of students, teachers and parents. The team should regularly agree on developmental priorities for SPHE and implement action plans including success criteria designed to appraise progress.

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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.