

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

**Loreto Secondary School
Wexford
Roll number: 63660A**

Date of inspection: 27 February 2012



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

**REPORT ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN
SOCIAL PERSONAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (SPHE)
INCLUDING RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE)**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	22 and 27 February 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal• Discussion with teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during eight lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was mostly good or very good with exemplary practice noted where the teacher acted as facilitator of learning and lessons were framed within the experiential learning cycle.
- The range of activities used provided students with good opportunities for reflection and interaction.
- In almost all instances, lessons were student-centred in design and delivery and the quality of engagement was often impressive.
- Very good support is given by management and health promotion is a priority for the school.
- Subject provision for SPHE, Health Education and RSE is excellent.
- Subject planning is very effective and student-focused with systematic review processes.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The RSE policy should be progressed as planned.
 - Lesson planning could be further informed by the school's set of yearly objectives and greater consistency could be achieved in the utilisation of learning outcomes in the initial and evaluation phases of lessons.
 - SPHE should be placed on school reports and teachers of SPHE should develop sets of appropriate statements for such use on school reports.
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INTRODUCTION

Loreto Secondary School provides second-level education to 699 girls. Students complete six years of schooling as the transition year (TY) programme is compulsory in senior cycle.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Lessons were very well planned, demonstrated consistency with the syllabus and clearly followed a developmental sequence of learning.
- At all phases of lessons, students were clear about the topic and the teacher's expectations. Some teachers shared the intended learning outcomes with the students at the start of lessons. There is potential to extend this practice and for teachers to revisit the intended learning outcomes at the end of the lesson when students are completing the personal reflection task in their SPHE journals.
- Resources used were very well chosen to motivate students. These included ICT slides and clips and worksheets that facilitated sequential learning and engagement. At the start of many lessons, very nice visualisation exercises and energisers were used to create a reflective atmosphere. Lesson pace was almost always very good.
- Commendably, lessons incorporated phases that provided opportunities for reflection and interaction. Active learning tasks included discussion, brainstorming, games and collaborative work, the principles of which were clearly understood by students. There were many very good examples of activities that made varying and appropriately challenging demands on students and the quality of learning was often very good. Students moved seamlessly from activity to activity.
- Mostly, a high level of student-teacher and student-student interaction was noted throughout lessons. During these, students played a key role in lesson development through their impressive contributions, questions and enthusiastic involvement in tasks.
- The most successful outcomes were achieved through activities that involved students in making informed judgements based on existing knowledge or information presented, encouraging them to provide a rationale and enhancing their decision-making skills.
- It was clear that teachers gave careful consideration to the design of student-centred lessons and adopting a role of facilitator of learning. This was generally very effectively achieved and delivery was often notable. In a few instances, there was disproportionate teacher input or too much time given to a single activity and these phases were not sufficiently meaningful for all. On such occasions, it is recommended that teachers balance student and teacher input and facilitate shorter dynamic activities.
- Lessons were framed within the experiential learning cycle and this approach was well implemented in many lessons. Continued consideration of each of the four phases involved – experiencing, processing, generalising and applying – would further inform good lesson design.
- A climate of trust and respect was established. Student contributions were expressed with clarity and confidence and affirmed by teachers. Curiosity and enthusiasm were evidently encouraged. Classroom management was firm but warm and students listened carefully to each other's contributions, often adding to or reinforcing a point of view.

- The assessment process was integrated into lesson structure. Junior and senior cycle groups keep portfolios of work and reflective journals and teachers complete a short assessment of each lesson.
- At the end of most lessons, learning was well consolidated and students were encouraged to reflect on what was learned and how they contributed to the day's lesson. Journals revealed very good learning in a range of SPHE and RSE modules. There was good support for literacy in the corrections of students' written work. Student work provided evidence of an accumulation of knowledge, skills and attitudes although the emphasis given to each of these three domains of learning varied.
- Parents are made aware of their child's participation in SPHE through letters home and progress is reported on during parent-teacher meetings. However, neither SPHE nor RSE are currently placed on school reports and this should be addressed in order to support their place in the curriculum. Teachers could develop sets of appropriate statements for such use that would report the acquisition of syllabus outcomes.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- As required, the school promotes the social, personal development of students and promotes health education for them in consultation with their parents, having due regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.
- Subject provision for SPHE is appropriately timetabled for all students in junior cycle, Health Education is provided on the curriculum for two years of senior cycle and a developmental programme of RSE is provided from first to sixth year.
- A core team of committed SPHE and RSE teachers is established. Ongoing and continuation training in SPHE is systematic.
- Most teachers of senior cycle RSE have availed of recent essential training. This should be facilitated at the earliest opportunity for the others. It would be useful for meetings of the distinct group of senior cycle RSE teachers to be facilitated on occasion.
- Precise criteria apply for the use of guest speakers for specialist modules and the delivery of such is integrated with preparatory and follow-up lessons with the teacher.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The RSE policy is currently being developed and a draft is prepared for consultation.
- SPHE is very effectively co-ordinated at subject planning and whole-school levels.
- Subject planning focuses on the social, physical and emotional needs of the adolescent student cohort. Strong emphasis is placed on developing good mental health.
- An excellent subject plan has been developed. The plan includes a very good set of yearly objectives to guide teachers. There is potential to make greater use of these objectives in planning and reviewing lessons.
- Within the subject plan, an organised and developmental programme of learning has been carefully considered for SPHE and RSE. These are well laid out in frameworks that integrate topics with methodologies, learning outcomes, resources, assessment and evaluation.

- Review is both ongoing and thorough. Senior and junior students periodically complete evaluations and module reviews, including modules given by guest speakers, and outcomes inform planning.
 - Self-evaluation is systematic including a periodic strengths and weaknesses analysis. Examples of ongoing changes were reported, such as the design of the reflective journal and the inclusion of more student activities in lessons. Survey sheets are sometimes used at the end of lessons to ascertain any gaps in learning and information sheets are used in response to any misconceptions.
 - A wide range of very suitable resources is available to support all aspects of the programmes and these are adapted year to year according to the review process and the needs and experiences of the student cohort.
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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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Published September 2012.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school found this subject inspection to be a most affirming, positive and beneficial experience.

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

The RSE policy continues to be progressed as planned.

All planning now takes account of the importance attaching to clearly-stated learning outcomes in the initial and evaluation phases of lessons.

Teachers and school management will reflect further on the desirability of placing SPHE on school reports.