

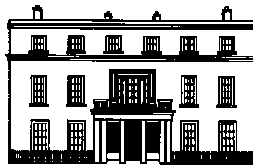
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**Lucan Community College  
Lucan, County Dublin  
Roll number: 70080T**

**Date of inspection: 18 November 2011**



**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)**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection:</b> 17 and 18 November 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 nine class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning in SPHE is very good.
- The level of whole-school support and provision for SPHE is excellent.
- The planning and coordination of SPHE is highly effective.
- The commitment of management and teachers to continuing professional development for SPHE is highly commended.
- Arrangements for staff deployment in the teaching of SPHE are excellent.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Extending the range of teaching methodologies should be a focus for future department planning.
  - Details of the assessment modes to be used and of the arrangements for recording students' learning and progress should be included in the subject plan.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Lucan Community College is a multi-denominational, coeducational school under the aegis of County Dublin Vocational Education Committee. It serves a large suburban catchment area and had an enrolment of 827 students at the time of the inspection. The school offers the Transition Year Option, the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) in addition to the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed varied from good to excellent, but was very good overall.
- Lessons were purposeful and the lesson outcomes were usually shared with the students at the start of the lesson. In many cases the attainment of the learning outcomes was checked at the end of the lesson, in line with best practice and the principles of Assessment for Learning.
- Students in all classes were active in their own learning and engaged well with the topics and activities. Group work was managed very well where it was used, and students were obviously accustomed to working collaboratively.
- In some classes, effective use was made of whole-class discussion, competently led by the teacher; there were also examples of skilful handling of sensitive subjects. In a few lessons, role-play was used to very good effect.
- A notable feature in almost all the lessons observed was the very good rapport between teachers and students, due perhaps to the fact that SPHE is taught mainly by class tutors, who know their students very well.
- The contents of students' copybooks and folders were evidence of previous learning and of the students' reflection on the topics already covered. Homework is assigned regularly, and the high standard of written work in folders and copybooks was a feature of most class groups visited.
- There were a few interesting examples of the integration of SPHE with other subjects, such as Music and Art. It is recommended that the potential of approaches such as debating, art work, poetry, creative writing, drama and music in teaching SPHE be explored. Extending the range of teaching methodologies in this way should be a focus for future department planning.
- Student reflection on each topic covered is included in the textbooks in use for junior cycle SPHE, and students are also surveyed at the end of the senior cycle RSE programme. This is very good practice.
- Some excellent reflective practice among teachers was evidenced by the use of the Lesson Review Form, which provides a means for teachers to reflect on what worked well or not so well in lessons and how they might approach a given topic in the future.
- Team-teaching was observed in two lessons. It is recommended that the potential of team-teaching and of peer observation along the lines of the school's TASK initiative (Teachers Actively Sharing Knowledge) be kept in mind when planning for SPHE.

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

- There is a clear commitment on the part of management and teaching staff to providing a high-quality SPHE programme for the students. The level of whole-school provision is excellent.
- In addition to the required timetabled allocation to SPHE in junior cycle and RSE in senior cycle, the school provides a Health Education module for two periods a week in Transition Year.
- Communication with parents regarding SPHE and RSE is excellent. Letters are sent out informing them of programmes and events, and the Parents' Association is consulted when policies are being developed. The school's RSE policy was in draft form, awaiting final ratification, at the time of the inspection.
- The work of coordinating the delivery of SPHE when such a large team is involved is demanding. The role of coordinator is assigned to a teacher with a special duties post. The duties of the post are clearly defined and the work of coordination is carried out with remarkable commitment and in a highly efficient manner.
- An excellent range of resources is available for the teaching of SPHE and RSE, and the resources are well organised and catalogued.
- SPHE is normally taught by class tutors, and this arrangement works well: teachers value SPHE as an opportunity to engage with their tutor group. Commendably, they are consulted annually by means of a Teacher Update Form as to whether or not they wish to teach SPHE. Alternative arrangements are made for classes whose teachers prefer not to do so.
- High importance is accorded by management to continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers of SPHE. A record is kept of teachers' attendance at courses, and in-house whole-school CPD on aspects of SPHE has been organised. Management is particularly anxious to ensure that teachers new to the subject have opportunities for CPD. The role of the coordinator in mentoring and supporting new teachers of SPHE is highly commended.
- A good range of co-curricular activities and special events complement the formal teaching of SPHE. For example, an RSE day is organised annually for third-year students. This excellent initiative provides students with an opportunity to engage with RSE in a focused way at an important transition point in their school lives.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- All the lessons observed were in line with syllabus requirements, and followed the long-term plan for the year group in question. This was evidence of very good whole-school planning, which is comprehensive and effective in ensuring consistency of delivery by the many teachers involved in delivering the programme.
- The minutes of SPHE teachers' meetings provide evidence of a team that is reflective and committed to improving the quality of the service it provides to students.
- In a number of the lessons observed, teachers made use of a lesson planning template which outlined the learning outcomes, the methodology and resources to be used, and how learning was to be assessed. It is recommended that details of the assessment modes

to be used and of the arrangements for recording students' learning and progress be included in the subject plan.

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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy 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.

We welcome the process of the inspection and the content of this inspection report and have a number of observations we wish to add.

1. The number of exemplars of good practice listed in the report is welcomed and Board commends the teachers involved on their good work. To quote the report: “Lessons observed varied from good to excellent...” and “A notable feature in almost all the lessons observed was the very good rapport between teachers and students...”
2. The Board commends the manner in which the students participated in the Inspection process and took the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and copy work. “...student were obviously accustomed to working collaboratively.”
3. We welcome the engagement with parents commended in the inspection report and believe that it is an essential aspect of the success of the SPHE programme in the college.
4. At a time when resources are tight, this report demonstrates the importance of good planning, strong professional development practices, collaboration, and teaching that maximises student learning. The capacity of the teachers involved to demonstrate these traits despite the decrease in available resources is praised by the Board.
5. While the report commends the “excellent range of resources (which) is available for the teaching of SPHE and RSE”, the SPHE subject department wishes to note that national provision of a Senior Cycle SPHE Syllabus would be of significant assistance to all teachers of SPHE.
6. The Board commends the report’s comments on the work of the SPHE coordinator who carries out her duties with “remarkable commitment and in a highly efficient manner”. The Board is concerned that with the moratorium on appointments to special duties positions, the college may not be able to continue such good practice in the future.
7. The recognition in the report of the importance of the CPD activities engaged in by staff and the engagement by staff in extra- and co-curricular activities to complement the formal teaching of SPHE is commended by the Board. The Board strongly values the commitment and dedication of the college staff.

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

Response to First Recommendation:

Many methodologies are in use in the SPHE class in Lucan Community College – the SPHE team strives as always (through for example, CPD, team-teaching and peer observation) to extend this range of methodologies further. It is proposed to include a list of the range of methodologies used in the subject plan.

Response to Second Recommendation

The Subject Plan will be altered to include details of assessment modes currently in use and also to specify the arrangements for recording students' learning and progress.