

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Coláiste Muire
Ennis, County Clare
Roll number: 61930Q**

Date of inspection: 14 November 2013



**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	13 and 14 November 2013
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 eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in SPHE ranged from good to very good, with some exemplary practice observed.
- A variety of active learning strategies and stimulating resources engaged students effectively.
- Very good rapport between teachers and students was evident.
- While teachers view assessment in SPHE as part of the activity of teaching and learning and they use various assessment modes to assess students' progress in SPHE, there is scope to develop this further.
- There is very good whole-school support for SPHE and a range of student-support structures provide a strong network of supports.
- Subject planning in SPHE is good, with some scope for development.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Practices and procedures in relation to assessment in SPHE should be further developed and formalised. The development of students' skills of reflection through portfolio work should be explored.
 - The current shortfall in timetabling provision for third-year SPHE should be kept under review.
 - The programme outlines for first and second-year SPHE as well as senior cycle relationships and sexuality education (RSE) should be further developed.
 - The existing RSE policy should be reviewed and expanded.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Muire, Ennis, is a long-established all-girls secondary school with a strong Christian ethos under the trusteeship of Catholic Education an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). The school is one of four providers of post-primary education in Ennis. The current enrolment stands at 810 students. Steeped in the Mercy traditions the school provides a very broad curriculum including Transition Year (TY).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The standard of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in the lessons observed with some excellent examples of experiential learning noted.
- Lessons were purposeful, well-structured and delivered at a pace that took account of students' needs and abilities. The practice of sharing learning intention with the class at the outset and returning to them at lesson closure, as observed in some lessons, should be more widely used.
- Teachers make very good use of a wide range of relevant teaching resources, including information and communication technology (ICT). These resources are used in planning, and to enhance teaching and consolidate learning.
- A good range of well-managed active-learning methodologies was utilised, for example: brainstorming, pair work, group tasks, discussion, and walking debate. These strategies were most effective where they were combined in a manner which appropriately limited teacher input and facilitated active student engagement with the lesson material.
- There was some very good use of targeted questioning to test students' knowledge, to elicit information from students, and to challenge them to reflect on the lesson topic. Teaching and learning were most effective where students were appropriately challenged by higher-order questions.
- Very good rapport between teachers and students was evident. Teachers demonstrated concern for their students and the manner of their interactions was warm and considerate. Students' behaviour was very good and they engaged enthusiastically in their learning.
- The learning environment of classrooms was enhanced through displays of SPHE related materials. Good attention was paid to literacy and subject-specific terminology was reinforced well, as well as a focus on numeracy in some lessons.
- Students worked well both individually and collaboratively and demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the concepts related to the various topics, appropriate to their level. Students' copybooks and folders indicate good progression in their work.
- In order to acknowledge the good work undertaken in SPHE, students should maintain a comprehensive list of work undertaken in SPHE throughout the year. This should then be used as a focus to undertake an end-of-year reflection to inform the ongoing review of SPHE in line with school self-evaluation.
- Teachers view assessment in SPHE as part of the activity of teaching and learning and use a variety of assessment modes to assess students' progress in SPHE. In order to enhance current practices, the SPHE team should further explore the areas of assessment and reflection in SPHE. In particular, the development of reflection skills through portfolio work should be further developed and assessed. Teachers should also agree and implement a set of 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 directors, year heads and guidance personnel in supporting students' welfare. Whole-school initiatives, such as Mission Week support students in developing a sense of belonging and integration with the school community as well as demonstrating a social conscience.
- Timetable provision for first and second-year SPHE is appropriate. The RSE programme is provided as an integral part of junior cycle SPHE and is delivered on a modular basis in the context of Religious Education (RE) at senior cycle.
- Currently, third-year SPHE is delivered in a combined module with Physical Education. Consequently, both subjects fall short in terms of the recommended time allocation. This should be kept under review in accordance with the requirements of Circular M11/03.
- Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) students study aspects of health education as part of their Social Education and Leisure and Recreation modules.
- In keeping with best practice, a core team is involved in SPHE delivery and teachers display a high level of commitment. The role of SPHE co-ordinator is well established and undertaken by a teacher who has considerable experience in teaching SPHE.
- SPHE teachers have availed of a variety of relevant in-service courses and management is committed to supporting the continued up-skilling of teachers. Whole-staff in-service has also been provided in a range of topics. Teachers should continue to avail of RSE training as necessary.
- The school should inform parents of students' progress in SPHE through school reports and the profile of SPHE should be raised at annual parent-teacher meetings.
- On occasion, visiting speakers are invited to supplement SPHE and RSE classes and such inputs are carefully planned for and evaluated. A whole-school policy for visiting speakers should be developed in line with Circular 23/10.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The SPHE team engages in collaborative planning both on a formal and informal basis and good progress has been made to date in developing a subject plan.
- 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.
- A detailed scheme of work has been developed for third year and LCA Social Education. These include time frames for the teaching of topics; the learning outcomes to be attained; the corresponding methodologies and resources and agreed assessment modes. The outline scheme of work for first-year and second-year SPHE should be further developed into a similar format. Schemes should also include a review section for comments on the achievement of the learning outcomes as this would facilitate regular review and inform future planning.

- The outline fourth-year and fifth-year RSE plans should also be further developed in line with the third-year plan, to reflect the requirements of circular 37/2010 and be included in an updated RSE policy.
- Most teachers maintain records of work completed. This could be further developed into self-evaluation on teaching and the student learning achieved.
- With a view to promoting ongoing improvement of the SPHE programme, students undertake end-of-module reviews. These are used to inform future planning. The next step for the team is to regularly agree on developmental priorities for SPHE and to implement action plans including success criteria designed to appraise progress.

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; a response was not received from the board.