

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Social Personal and Health
Education (SPHE)
REPORT**

**Sandford Park School
Ranelagh, Dublin 6w
Roll number: 60640C**

Date of inspection: 3 May 2013



**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) AND RELATIONSHIP AND SEXUALITY
EDUCATION (RSE)

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	1, 2 and 3 May 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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good, with examples of very good teaching practice being evident in all lessons.
- Students engaged actively and confidently in learning activities and in particular, with the collaborative co-operative learning opportunities provided.
- A very good focus on the integration of literacy and numeracy was achieved in the lessons observed.
- There is very good whole school support for SPHE including RSE at senior cycle.
- Substantial progress has been achieved in development of SPHE and RSE policies, subject plans and common schemes of work which are of a high quality.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- A review of the existing arrangements and structures for subject planning and team working is recommended to support the ongoing collaborative work of the subject department team.
 - The assessment policy for SPHE/RSE should be further developed to include a system for recording, tracking, monitoring and reporting of student progress.
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INTRODUCTION

Sandford Park School has a current enrolment of 208 boys. Programmes offered at the school include the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme and the established Leaving Certificate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good, with examples of very good teaching practice being evident in all lessons. An effective range of teaching strategies was used which incorporated a strong emphasis on collaborative learning including pairwork and groupwork.
- The experiential learning cycle was incorporated into the lessons observed, all of which were well planned and prepared. Learning outcomes were clearly articulated, written on the whiteboard and in some lessons, revisited thereby facilitating effective assessment and consolidation of learning. The lesson topics were in line with the planned programme and very good continuity with previous learning was evident.
- Lesson content and pace were pitched appropriately to the class groups. Lessons were well structured with effective sequencing of activities. While a good balance between teacher led and student-centred activities was achieved, a few lessons would have been enhanced with the greater provision of opportunities for student-led activities.
- Effective use of appropriate questions, which included lower order and higher-order questions, promoted student reflection and thinking as well as facilitating the assessment of their learning.
- A wide range of resources was used including information and communication technology (ICT) to support student engagement and stimulate discussion and thinking. While textbooks were used effectively, it is important that a variety of resource materials is used to ensure an integrated and balanced coverage of the learning topics.
- Very good rapport has been established by the teachers with their students which facilitated a positive and supportive learning environment. Students were listened to and their contributions were appropriately affirmed.
- Students engaged actively and confidently in learning activities and in particular, with the collaborative co-operative learning opportunities provided which they enjoyed. They participated well, demonstrating good communication and listening skills and the lesson activities also developed their personal reflection skills.
- A very good focus on the integration of literacy and numeracy was achieved in all the lessons observed with some excellent strategies addressing numeracy being noted in some lessons.
- Student learning was evident through completion of worksheets in their text books. Home tasks are assigned. It is recommended that formative developmental comment is given in response to both oral and significant written work. The written recording of learning should be facilitated through the introduction of a student learning journal as part of a student portfolio for all students. A set of appropriate comments should be developed for inclusion in school reports on students' progress in SPHE/RSE based on their acquisition of syllabus objectives and learning outcomes.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Appropriate timetabled provision is made for SPHE for all students in junior cycle. RSE is delivered during a nine week Personal and Social Development module in TY. While RSE is timetabled for fifth-year students, it is not formally timetabled for sixth year students. Six RSE lessons are provided for fifth and sixth-year students during the school year as required. The scheduling of the RSE provision in senior cycle should be reviewed and evaluated to ensure good continuity and integration between RSE lessons.
- There is very good whole school support for SPHE and RSE. Teacher deployment is appropriate, with very good levels of motivation, self-reflection and commitment being evident. As SPHE/RSE teachers are also form teachers, they remain with their class group through junior cycle and also teach RSE to their fifth-year classes, thereby providing continuity and attention to student welfare which is very good practice. Gender balance has been maintained in the deployment of teachers to the SPHE team.
- School management is very supportive of continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers and has invested significantly in the training of its SPHE teachers. A planned systematic programme of CPD for teachers should continue to be adopted which would also facilitate attendance at refresher courses.
- Consideration could be given to the further development of co-curricular activities focused on health and wellbeing, for example, a healthy eating week. A commendable range of talks on aspects of adolescent health and wellbeing are held for parents.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Significant progress has been achieved in the development of SPHE and RSE policies and subject plans which are of a high quality. This work has been very effectively and competently coordinated by the subject coordinator. The subject plans would benefit from the role of the subject coordinator being clearly defined and clarity being provided regarding rotation of the role.
- The SPHE/RSE planning team is comprised of the subject coordinator, guidance counsellor and school planning coordinator, and meets once a term. While this arrangement works well, it is important that the whole subject department operates as a team and that opportunities are provided for capacity building. Teachers rely on informal conversations to consult, share practice and resources. To support the ongoing collaborative work of all teachers, a review of the existing arrangements and structures for subject planning and team working is recommended.
- Very good practice is evident in the common schemes of work for SPHE and RSE which have been developed collaboratively for each year except third year. These incorporate an integrated framework which includes lesson content, learning outcomes, methodologies, resources, literacy and numeracy, homework and assessment. A common plan for third-year SPHE should be agreed in line with these. To further develop this very good work, cross-curricular links and co-curricular activities should be clearly identified and explicitly referenced in all schemes of work.
- An assessment policy for SPHE/RSE is included in the subject plan and it is recommended that this is further developed to include a system for recording, tracking, monitoring and reporting of student progress.

- An excellent range of suitable resources is available to support the SPHE and RSE programmes. A shared electronic folder which includes ICT resources is in place and these are augmented on an ongoing basis.

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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.