

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Presentation Secondary School  
Listowel, County Kerry  
Roll number: 61380H**

**Date of inspection: 20 May 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)**

---

**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Date of inspection</b>   | 20 May 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 three class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul> |

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Teaching and learning of a very high standard was observed in all lessons.
- The variety of teaching methods used by staff and their appropriate application in practice illustrated a clear commitment to continuing self-evaluation.
- The school's ethos is conducive to the learning and teaching of SPHE, and the subject is delivered in a manner that is in keeping with that ethos.
- The SPHE department is well supported by senior management and is led by highly competent teachers.
- SPHE department plans are well structured and are in keeping with the school's philosophy of education
- Staff members have engaged in considerable professional development.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- In keeping with current good practice, the development of whole-school policies and procedures in the areas of confidentiality, assessment and referrals is recommended.
-

## **INTRODUCTION**

Presentation Secondary School, Listowel is a girl's school with an enrolment of 370 students at the time of the inspection. Following the Junior Certificate examination, students may opt for Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) or the established Leaving Certificate programme.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The standard of teaching was very high and examples of excellent practice were observed in all lessons. Teachers showed a clear understanding of the nature of the topics under consideration and of the fact that the topics demanded approaches to teaching that reflected the, sometimes sensitive, issues being considered. Topics included the role of experience in the formation of values, and attitudes to use of legal and illegal substances.
- It was clear that staff consideration of professional practice and of its application was ongoing in a culture open to self-evaluation. This was reflected in the variety of teaching methods used and in the delivery of stimulating lessons.
- Students remained engaged throughout the lessons and showed a keen interest in the topics presented for consideration. It was clear that the learning of previous lessons had been effective and that it was used in the consolidation of current learning. Students responded well to the materials presented, to questions and to the directions of staff.
- Good relationships between staff and students were observed in each lesson. This facilitated the consideration of issues in a manner that was respectful and ordered while being open to curiosity. Students showed a clear understanding of the nature of SPHE and of its relevance to their lives. Their positive attitudes to the subject, expressed in a questionnaire associated with this evaluation, reflected well the efforts of staff and the quality of students' engagement with the subject.
- Formative assessment was observed as a continuous process in the course of lessons and was based on teachers' knowledge of students' as individuals. Teachers showed skill and sensitivity in the use of questions that varied in levels of complexity according to the issue and to the individual being addressed.

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

- The provision of SPHE, including RSE, and its resourcing is appropriate. All junior cycle students are in receipt of one lesson of SPHE per week. Additional arrangements are made to facilitate classes in the region of fifteen students for SPHE lessons to enable the use of methods that incorporate experiential learning. RSE is delivered to senior cycle students through Religious Education (RE).
- The high quality of teaching reflects a similarly high quality of leadership in an ethos that is well established and shared. Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to engage in continuing professional development (CPD) and teachers function in an environment that is mutually supportive and supportive of students. Although some SPHE teachers have not yet engaged in SPHE-specific training, all have engaged in considerable CPD that is strongly related to SPHE and RSE.
- An integrated system of supports for students has been established in the school with the collaboration of, for example, the guidance department, the additional educational needs

department and the chaplaincy. In addition to the curricular supports provided by SPHE, there is, at the request of staff, a general commitment on the part of senior management to assigning the role of class tutor to SPHE teachers. Where possible, class tutors retain the same class group through junior cycle. There is ongoing communication between year heads and class tutors. This is good practice.

- Collaboration among staff in the SPHE department is ongoing and extensive. Common programmes of work are shared formally in the course of meetings and informally throughout the school year.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The SPHE department is well structured. Regular formal and informal meetings occur. A co-ordinator has been appointed with timetabled provision to facilitate planning, and clear records have been kept of the department's processes and procedures.
- SPHE department plans and the plans of individual staff members are comprehensive and outline considerable engagement with evaluation of both the SPHE programme in general and of specific elements of the programme. The results of an evaluation of the RSE programme in 2010 were clearly presented as part of the SPHE department plan. This is very good practice.
- The planning and preparation of lessons observed was of the highest calibre. The conduct of the lessons, including the participation and engagement of students attested to the expertise and professionalism of teachers. The design of classrooms and furniture facilitated the flexible arrangement of seating and resources, such as data projectors and charts, in keeping with good practice in SPHE.
- SPHE department plans are well integrated with the school plan, including the whole-school guidance or student-support plan, and contain clear references to the school's mission and policies. The plans display a common understanding and commitment to the school's philosophy of education. In view of the growing awareness of issues regarding confidentiality, referral and assessment, it is recommended that a whole-school approach be taken to the further development of policies and procedures related to these.
- It is a notable feature of SPHE planning that the input of other subject departments, and of teachers of programmes such as the LCA, was sought, received and included. Such collaboration is of the essence of good planning.

---

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.

*Published, February 2012*