

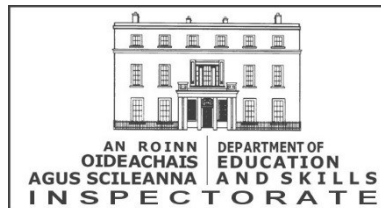
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Seamount College**  
**Kinvara, County Galway**  
**Roll number: 63050T**

**Date of inspection: 7 October 2015**



**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>	7 October 2015
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods</li> <li>• Examination of students' work</li> <li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</li> </ul>
<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>	

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The planning and delivery of SPHE benefit from strong whole-school support for the subject, the effective leadership provided by the principal, the commitment, flexibility and enthusiasm of the SPHE/RSE teachers, and their involvement in ongoing training.
- The standard of teaching and learning was of a high quality, with many aspects of excellent practice observed. Teachers were very skilled in the use of active learning methodologies.
- Very good rapport between teachers and students was evident. Students were very engaged in their learning and demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of topics appropriate to their level.
- Practices in relation to assessment in SPHE are progressing well; there is scope to formalise and include these in an SPHE assessment policy.
- A range of student-support structures provides a cohesive network of supports for students.
- The quality of subject planning is very good and, based on existing teacher reviews, there is a commitment to self-evaluation and review.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- An SPHE and RSE assessment policy should be developed; this should reflect existing good practices and include a set of criteria to be used for assessing students' progress in SPHE.
- To further promote self-evaluation and to support more formal reviews of SPHE, provision should be made for the inclusion of the views of students and parents. .

## **INTRODUCTION**

Seamount College, Kinvara is a voluntary, co-educational Catholic secondary school under the patronage of the Bishop of Galway. The school is the sole provider of second-level education in the locality and draws its students from a wide area. The current enrolment stands at 379 students. The school provides a broad curriculum including Transition Year (TY).

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Very high quality teaching and learning was observed in lessons, with some excellent examples of experiential learning noted. Lessons were very well planned, structured and sequenced, and delivered at a pace that allowed students time to engage with and reflect on the key concepts of the lesson.
- Teachers make very good use of a wide range of teaching resources, including information and communication technology (ICT) in planning, and to enhance teaching and consolidate learning.
- The good practice of sharing learning outcomes with the class at the outset and returning to them at lesson closure was evident.
- Active learning methodologies were a central feature of all lessons and included pair work, group work, discussion and role-play. These provided for a very good level of student engagement with the topics under study. Best practice was observed where the teacher acted as a facilitator of learning where, for example, students were encouraged to consider, analyse and synthesise issues during activity-based learning. This practice assists students in developing higher-order thinking skills.
- Group work was particularly effective when the activity was time bound, group members were nominated to key roles and there was an effective reporting-back phase, followed by processing of the feedback to ensure that learning occurred.
- Teachers demonstrated good practice in utilising students' experiences and prior learning to introduce and develop new concepts. 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.
- Students' behaviour was very good. The atmosphere in lessons was positive, conducive to learning and was marked by very good interpersonal relationships between teachers and students. Students participated in a co-operative, interested and enthusiastic manner.
- Good practice in support of students' literacy was evident in the identification of key words and there was a focus on numeracy in some lessons.
- Students demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the topics under study, commensurate with their ability. Students' workbooks and folders indicate good progression in their work. There were some very good examples of the provision of detailed formative feedback on the students' workbooks.
- The ongoing assessment of student progress in SPHE was integrated into lesson delivery. This was achieved through such activities as oral questioning, written exercises, discussions, monitoring of student work, and assessment of tasks. In order to enhance current practices, an assessment policy for SPHE should be agreed to reflect the good practices and procedures observed. 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 school has a long tradition of supporting its students through health education and pastoral-care structures, in line with the school's ethos. There is very good collaboration between the SPHE team and senior management, and with guidance personnel and learning-support personnel in supporting students' welfare.
- There is great support for cross-curricular and co-curricular SPHE activities such as Active School Week, Health Promoting Schools, the Buddy system and drama workshops.
- Timetable provision for SPHE is appropriate and in line with Circular M11/03. 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 at senior cycle.
- The role of SPHE co-ordinator is currently undertaken on a rotating-voluntary basis by a teacher who is new to teaching SPHE.
- The school's engagement with SPHE-related training is ongoing and reflects great commitment from the principal and the teachers involved. Several teachers have training in RSE and there is a commitment to continue to avail of RSE training as necessary. Whole-staff in-service has also been provided in various SPHE related areas.
- Partnership with parents is a key priority for the school and students and their parents are advised regularly on their progress in the subject.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- There was evidence of very good individual lesson planning and preparation.
- The SPHE team displays a high level of commitment and very good team work. It is good practice that discrete time for whole-team SPHE meetings is provided for during staff planning days and records are maintained. SPHE teachers reported that they meet informally on a regular basis.
- Very good progress has been made to date in collaboratively developing an SPHE subject plan. Outline teaching plans for each year group have been developed. Also detailed schemes of work have been developed for SPHE and RSE. These include the specific timeframes for module delivery, the learning outcomes, as well as methodologies and modes of assessment, with a clear focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. In order to formalise the very good practice of lesson review observed during the evaluation, these plans should also include a review mechanism to support teachers in undertaking regular reviews.
- An RSE policy has been developed. Management stated its intention to review the RSE policy collaboratively and that it will go through a consultation process with the student council, parents' association and the board of management. The school is committed to the periodic review of other SPHE related policies.
- As a result of the recent teacher review of SPHE there was evidence of some ongoing self-evaluation in relation to SPHE, and this is enhanced by ongoing informal reviews among the teachers. To support more formal reviews of SPHE and to further develop

self-evaluation, provision should be made to include the views of students and parents, from time to time.

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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 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.