

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

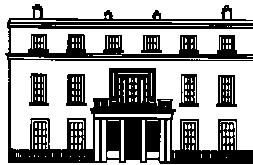
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Coláiste Dún Iascaigh  
Cahir, County Tipperary  
Roll number: 76063D**

**Date of inspection: 23 April 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),  
INCLUDING RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE)**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	22 and 23 April 2013
<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 four class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching ranged from good to excellent.
- While there was evidence of learning in lessons, students' files often failed to demonstrate the richness of learning associated with almost a year's study of SPHE.
- Students' participation in lessons was well facilitated.
- Classroom atmosphere was most positive.
- The school's overall provision for students' well being is impressive, and there is appropriate provision for SPHE and RSE.
- The planning work of the subject department is very well co-ordinated.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- A coordinated approach to the filing of SPHE materials should be adopted with students.
  - As relevant, provision for a range of activities in lessons is recommended, and teachers are advised to consider the incorporation of cooperative learning structures.
  - A policy to inform management's approach to the deployment of teachers to SPHE should be agreed, and this should be informed by best practice.
  - Programmes of work should be further developed and, as relevant, teachers should seek to adhere to the number of class periods allocated to each module in these programmes of work.
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## INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Dún Iascaigh is co-educational. It has a current enrolment of 626 students, consisting of 327 males and 299 females. The school provides the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY), and Leaving Certificate programmes, as well as the Leaving Certificate Vocational programme (LCVP).

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching observed ranged from good to excellent, and there was evidence of learning in lessons.
- Best practice was when both module and topic were referenced at lesson outset, and where students' engagement was framed within a series of stated learning intentions. Both practices are further encouraged. When identifying learning outcomes for lessons, teachers were advised to consider, in addition to the knowledge that might be acquired, the skills and attitudes that might be developed.
- At times, lessons demonstrated an inconsistency with the subject department's agreed programme of work and content differed from that identified in the syllabus for each year group. As relevant, teachers are reminded of the value of adhering to agreed programmes of work, and to the significance of the syllabus in terms of informing lesson planning and delivery.
- Students' participation in lessons was well facilitated. Best practice was where a range of activities was included, as this varied the demands on students. In one lesson, for example, students' involvement in discussion was strongly promoted, their answering and asking of questions was fully encouraged, a walking debate was organised, which promoted self expression and reasoning, and an end-of-class worksheet was provided, which supported students' reflection on learning. This multi-strategy approach is praised and further encouraged.
- Teachers provided quality instructions to students, activities were carefully planned and well managed, with students' participation closely monitored and supported.
- Group activities were accommodated in lessons. This is positive. Teachers were advised to consider incorporating cooperative learning structures such as, for example, 'Think-Pair-Share' and 'Round Robin'. More complex structures such as 'Graffiti' and 'Jigsaw', should also be considered.
- A fuller application of the experiential method was recommended in some instances.
- There was a clear emphasis in lessons on the development of students' literacy levels, with ample opportunity provided for students to read, write, listen, speak, and to build and demonstrate comprehension.
- Considering the time of year, students' files did not demonstrate the richness of learning associated with almost a year's study of SPHE. Therefore, a coordinated approach to the filing of SPHE materials should be adopted with students. This would provide a basis for the planned introduction of portfolio assessment. Advice regarding the organisation and management of this assessment strategy is provided in the *SPHE Junior Cycle Guidelines for Teachers*.

- The requirement to teach all ten modules annually was cited as an ongoing challenge by some teachers. It would appear that, sometimes, too much time is devoted to some modules, to the detriment of others. In the discussion of this matter, actions designed to help teachers to address this challenge were provided.
- Provision for a lesson conclusion was identified as an area for development in some lessons. It is paramount, especially in SPHE where students' contact with the subject is but once weekly, that learning is consolidated before lessons end.
- Classroom atmosphere was most positive. Interactions were warm and respectful. Teachers were firm but fair in terms of their approach to classroom management.

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

- Overall provision for students' well being is impressive, with a seamless merging of roles and responsibilities amongst the key staff members.
- SPHE is appropriately timetabled in junior cycle, and the programme benefits from the active involvement of the school's guidance counsellors. In addition, the school timetables a personal development programme in TY.
- RSE is provided in both junior and senior cycles. In-class instruction is complemented by a carefully planned schedule of visiting speakers. A well-developed RSE policy exists, which has informed the development of a very thorough information leaflet for parents.
- The subject is well resourced, materials are well organised and managed and are accessible to all.
- A policy to inform management's approach to the deployment of teachers to SPHE should be agreed, and this should guide future practice. Best practice principles should inform this policy. These can be summarised as follows: the establishment of a core team of interested teachers; provision for continuity of teacher from first-year through to third-year; gender balance in composition, particularly in a co-educational school; and, at a minimum, the completion of introductory training by all assigned teachers.
- A more systematic and incremental approach to the development of teachers' knowledge and skills for the teaching of SPHE should also be adopted.
- Communication with parents in relation to SPHE and RSE is well developed.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The planning work of the subject department is very well co-ordinated, by a teacher who is keenly interested in, and most knowledgeable about, SPHE, and who actively facilitates the sharing of good practice.
- Programmes of work reflect the samples provided in the teacher guidelines. These ought to be augmented by: time-basing the programmes; including learning outcomes; and linking them to the school's extensive calendar of relevant events. In time, and in conjunction with the further development of existing resource files, consideration should be given to the identification, on a module-by-module basis, of suitable resources, methodologies and approaches to assessment. A re-organisation of existing subject department meeting time, to facilitate periodic meetings of year-group teachers, may help in the achievement of these recommendations, with the co-ordinator acting as overseer.

- Teachers prepared well for lessons, with lesson planning being informed by a range of available resources.

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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and some of the subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school 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**

Subject Provision and Whole School support for students' wellbeing, the work of the Department led by the Co-coordinator, the planning, preparation and delivery of subjects SPHE and RSE were identified and praised in the report.

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

The Subject Department has taken on board the recommendations contained in the report and view these as an opportunity to improve and develop the learning opportunities for students. The Department has contacted the HSE with a view to participating in Health Promoting School.