Subject Inspection of Social, Personal and Health Education

REPORT

Crescent College Comprehensive
Dooradoyle, Limerick
Roll number: 81014R

Date of inspection: 23 November 2011
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SOCIAL, PERSONAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (SPHE)

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</td>
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<td>• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and teachers</td>
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MAIN FINDINGS

- Very high quality teaching was characterised by excellent planning, the use of stimulating resources, and clear learning outcomes communicated to the students at the beginning of the lesson and assessed at the end.
- Teachers are very skilled in the use of active learning methodologies.
- Very good rapport between teachers and students was evident.
- Assessment in SPHE is viewed as part of the activity of teaching and learning and teachers use a combination of assessment modes to assess students’ progress in SPHE. However, there is scope to develop this further.
- A range of policies that support the SPHE programme is currently under review.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The assessment of SPHE should be further explored and common approaches should be developed and implemented.
- All SPHE and RSE teachers should engage in initial and ongoing training.
- Whole-school policies for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and visiting speakers should be developed and ratified.
INTRODUCTION
Crescent College Comprehensive is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 870 students. It is a Catholic school but welcomes and accepts students of all faiths. Key strands of the Jesuit ethos, “openness to growth,” “reflective practice,” and “cura personalis” (care for the person) underpin the work of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING
- Very high quality teaching and learning was observed in the majority of lessons. Numerous examples of the excellent use of experiential learning were noted and students were carefully guided through the required steps of experiencing, processing, generalising and applying their learning.
- 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.
- The good practice of sharing the learning outcomes with students at the beginning of lessons was observed and these were returned to at the lesson closure.
- A good range of well-managed strategies was utilised, for example: brainstorming, pair work, group tasks, discussion, artwork, role-play and reflection. 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 use of differentiated teaching including questioning combined with pair and individual learning tasks to facilitate students’ engagement in their learning. This area could be further developed. Teaching and learning were most effective where students were appropriately challenged by a combination of higher-order and lower-order questions.
- Teachers make excellent use of information and communication technology (ICT) in planning and to enhance teaching and consolidate learning. Expertise within the SPHE team is utilised effectively in upskilling colleagues.
- Students demonstrated great enthusiasm for SPHE and were engaged and eager to participate in class activities.
- Students’ behaviour was exemplary in all lessons. Classroom atmosphere was consistently positive, supported by an overall approach to the teaching of SPHE that was encouraging, respectful and affirming.
- Very good rapport between teachers and students was evident. This was effective in developing a caring relationship with students and reflected well the student-centred ethos permeating the school.
- Students worked well both individually and collaboratively and demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the concepts related to the various topics. Students’ copybooks and folders indicate good progression in their work. Best practice was observed when students dated their work.
- While 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, there is scope to develop this further. The teachers should explore and further develop the area of assessment and reflection in SPHE. Teachers should agree and implement a range of approaches that could assess student learning on a module-by-module basis.
**SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- A cohesive and strong network of supports is deliberately designed to carefully target student welfare and reflect the school’s Jesuit ethos effectively. There is very good collaboration between the SPHE team and the care team, the ethos team, the chaplain, class tutors, the special needs team, guidance personnel, and year heads in supporting the needs of students.

- There is very good whole-school support for SPHE. Good timetable provision is made for SPHE, including the RSE programme which is provided as an integral part of junior cycle SPHE. Fifth-year students undertake a twelve-double-class-period RSE module which is delivered in the context of Religious Education. The transfer of some of this module into sixth year should be considered.

- The practice of removing a very small number of students from SPHE to attend learning support should be reviewed.

- On occasion, visiting speakers are invited to supplement SPHE and RSE classes and such inputs are carefully planned for and evaluated.

- Management should seek for continuity of teacher throughout the cycle and when possible, that the SPHE teacher also teaches the class for another subject. Management endeavours to ensure that there is a gender balance in the deployment of SPHE teachers.

- To supplement the training that some teachers have received for SPHE, it is recommended that a systematic and incremental training plan should be implemented. As a minimum, all SPHE teachers should avail of the two-day introductory SPHE training provided by the SPHE support service and thereafter more specialised training could be availed of on a phased basis. A record of training needs and training undertaken should be maintained.

- A large collection of SPHE resources, accessible to all teachers, is available through the school’s well-developed virtual learning environment, as well as in a year-head office.

**PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The position of subject co-ordinator is voluntary and rotated. The SPHE team engages in collaborative planning, mainly on an informal basis, and formal meetings tend to be limited to once a term and tend not to include the full team. However, the SPHE team plans to meet informally at least monthly to progress planning. Discrete time for whole-team SPHE meetings should be provided for during staff planning days.

- A comprehensive SPHE subject plan has been developed. Currently the SPHE teachers follow a time-framed course outline. For more detailed planning individual lesson plans are developed for each lesson. These include the learning outcomes to be attained, and the corresponding methodologies and resources. These should be further developed to include more specific information with regard to agreed assessment procedures and a review section.

- There was evidence of excellent individual lesson planning and preparation, tailored for individual class groups. These were appropriately based on the school’s agreed SPHE
Most teachers maintain records of work completed. This could be further developed into self-reflection on the teaching and the student learning achieved.

- The SPHE team has shown considerable capacity for self-evaluation and improvement. Regular review of SPHE provision takes place leading to goal setting. The next step for the team is the development and implementation of action plans, including performance indicators, designed to appraise progress in achieving these aspirations.

- A range of whole-school policies that support the SPHE programme are currently under review. A RSE policy should be developed and ratified in line with circular 37/10. A whole-school policy for visiting speakers should be developed in line with circular 23/10.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the 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.

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