

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Social, Personal and Health
Education
REPORT
Presentation Secondary School
Wexford
Roll number: 63661C**

Date of inspection: 27 February 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)
INCLUDING RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE)**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	26 and 27 February 2013
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of teaching and learning during five lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal • Discussion with teachers • Interaction with students 	

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was mostly very good.
- Teachers employed student-centred approaches to teaching SPHE with the resources and strategies in use promoting very high levels of active learning and student collaboration.
- Assessment is viewed as a key part of teaching and learning but there is scope to develop the modes of assessing and reporting on students' progress.
- Provision for SPHE on the school timetable is fully appropriate throughout junior cycle and excellent in fifth year, but the provision for RSE through the three years of senior cycle should be more systematic and developmental.
- The school lives its mission statement to provide a positive climate by building effective communication, creating a health promoting environment and embracing self-esteem.
- Subject planning practices are good with an evident focus on developing learning but the curricular plans for SPHE and RSE should be further developed.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Learning outcomes should be referred to, in both the introduction and assessment phases of all lessons, to ensure a good balance is achieved between the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be developed.
 - The curricular provision of RSE in TY and sixth year should be enhanced in tandem with the phased training of teachers and the development of a streamlined curricular plan for the three years of senior cycle.
 - As part of subject planning, teachers should agree and implement a range of approaches to assess learning.
-

INTRODUCTION

Presentation Secondary School is a secondary schools for girls in Wexford town with a current enrolment of 750. The programmes provided include an optional Transition Year (TY).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall, the quality of teaching was very good. A very good environment for learning was generated. Classrooms were teacher based enhancing the accessibility of the very good subject-specific displays and students' work. Room layouts facilitated collaborative learning and teacher circulation.
- Overall, lessons were very well prepared and structured. Most lessons achieved a very good balance between the progression of students' knowledge and skill and attitude development. The junior cycle lessons were notable in terms of the development of a wide range of key skills. Lesson pace and levels of challenge for students were almost always very good.
- Lesson introduction was good throughout; teachers carefully outlined the purpose and made clear connections with previous learning. To build on this good practice, lesson purpose should be communicated in terms of intended learning outcomes from the syllabuses. These could be referenced in both the introduction and assessment phases of lessons, as practiced in one lesson visited. In this lesson, the learning outcomes enabled students to fully reflect on the knowledge, attitudes and skills being developed as well as helping them assess their own learning.
- Teachers used variety of methodologies including many opportunities for good quality active, collaborative and experiential learning.
- A range of well chosen stimulating resources were used, including teacher-generated information and communication technology (ICT) materials, many of which supported the active participation of students.
- Good development of subject-specific literacy was evident in most lessons. Support for oral literacy was generally very good and many lessons contained opportunities for communication, dialogue and discussion. In one lesson, however, students should have had greater opportunities to articulate their learning and to use new terminology in a wider range of oral formats as well as written formats.
- The experiential learning cycle was applied in most lessons and case studies were used to evoke students' personal reactions to real-life scenarios. Teachers facilitated the first three phases of the cycle, namely experiencing, processing and generalising, but the applying phase could have been better facilitated at times.
- The quality of teacher-student relationships, rapport and encouragement was very good. Classroom atmosphere was positive and student behaviour was exemplary. Teachers developed a trusting relationship with their students including a very good awareness of their individual potential and abilities.
- The quality of learning overall was very good. Students demonstrated great enthusiasm for SPHE and RSE and they participated to a very high level, rising to all the challenges presented to them, including in one lesson making presentations to their peers.
- Students demonstrated excellent listening and speaking skills when collaborating on tasks and were learning from each other. They also demonstrated excellent comprehension

skills and expressed their view points very well when asked to do so. Students performed very well in higher-order tasks and questions, kept up with lesson pace and adapted well to transitions between activities in lessons.

- While teachers view assessment as a key part of SPHE, both providing affirming feedback during classroom tasks and reporting to parents on students' progress, there is scope to develop the modes of assessment. Students record their own learning in their journals and evaluate workshops given by external speakers.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- In junior cycle, SPHE is properly timetabled and RSE is provided by the teacher as an integral component of the programme. Timetabling for first and second year groups is arranged so that the guidance counsellor can teach each group for a series of lessons enabling cross-curricular and whole-school approaches to student wellbeing.
- Provision for SPHE and RSE in senior cycle has many commendable aspects, in particular, the school's elected provision of one class period per week of SPHE for fifth years, but provision for RSE should be enhanced in TY and sixth year. The extension of provision in both these years should be linked with a plan for the phased continuation of teacher training in senior cycle areas including RSE and mental health.
- The TY programme provides for student wellbeing through a range of workshops including mental health, cyber-bullying and relationships. These are provided by visiting speakers, as is mental health in sixth year. While the workshops are evaluated and have a proven record of providing productive learning experiences, management is advised of current best practice guidelines in the delivery of SPHE and RSE in circular 0023/2010. Management could also consider developing a policy on visitors in line with this circular.
- Management employs good practices in communicating key messages about the school's RSE provision to parents and the school website provides very useful information on SPHE and RSE. Topics addressed in class are often connected with talks provided for parents and this is commended.
- Teacher deployment is very good with high levels of training and motivation being demonstrated by those involved.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject planning structures and practices are good with whole-team meetings being held each term. A subject convenor provides valuable support for collaborative planning.
- Planning documents are beneficial to teaching and include active learning methodologies and developmental learning experiences for students. To enhance the junior cycle SPHE subject plan, it is recommended that the format be arranged in a manner that integrates the listed methodologies, resources, learning outcomes and assessment.
- While there is a good plan for SPHE in fifth year, a single coherent plan for RSE in senior cycle should be developed. This plan should enable the provision of a developmental curricular programme of RSE in each of the three years, in accordance with circular 27/2008, the *RSE Interim Curriculum and Guidelines* and the *Senior Cycle SPHE Draft Curriculum Framework*.

- Planning for the development of lesson resources is good. It is noteworthy that some teachers are broadening the existing range third year in an effort to move away from the regular text; developing this could be a collaborative planning activity.
- Relevant policies on RSE, SPHE, bullying, and substance use are good but need updating.

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