

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

**Subject Inspection in Social Personal and Health Education**  
**(SPHE)**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Scoil Dara
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Church St Kilcock Co Kildare
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	61691B

**Date of Inspection: 16-01-2018**



**WHAT IS A SUBJECT INSPECTION?**

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

**HOW TO READ THIS REPORT**

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

## SUBJECT INSPECTION

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	15-01-2018 & 16-01-2018
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</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 relevant staff</li></ul>

### School context

Scoil Dara is a large co-educational post-primary school in Kilcock, County Kildare, with a current enrolment of 842 students. The school offers the new Junior Cycle, Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate Established, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, and the Leaving Certificate Applied programmes. The Transition Year (TY) programme is offered on an optional basis.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from satisfactory to very good.
- Teachers facilitated learning that was active and collaborative.
- There is considerable scope to improve the quality of subject provision of SPHE and Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE).
- A good range of whole-school initiatives is provided to support student wellbeing and complement the SPHE programme.
- A small team of teachers is responsible for the delivery of SPHE.
- Overall, the quality of subject planning for SPHE is fair, and individual teacher planning is reliant on the textbook.

#### Recommendations

- Experiential learning should be developed further, and the current emphasis on knowledge and understanding should be expanded to include a greater focus on skills, attitudes and values.
- The school timetable should be restructured to accommodate the inclusion of required SPHE and RSE provision in line with Circular Letter 27/2008.
- To build capacity and expertise for teachers of SPHE, and to ensure continuity for students, the responsibility for delivering the subject should be shared more evenly among the core team.
- Subject planning should be developed collaboratively by the SPHE department, taking cognisance of the spiral and developmental nature of the subject; and links with Guidance, and whole-school initiatives that enhance the delivery of SPHE and RSE should be strengthened.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed ranged between satisfactory and very good.
- The good practice of sharing the learning intentions with students was observed in all lessons. These tended to focus on knowledge and understanding of the topic. To build on this, intended learning should also explore the skills, attitudes and values to be gained or developed in the lesson. Learning was most effective where the lesson built on students' prior learning, emphasising the developmental nature of SPHE.
- A good range of supplementary class materials was provided by teachers in most lessons. This included video clips, and some teacher-generated materials such as worksheets, presentations and interactive quizzes to enhance learning and to prompt discussion.
- Opportunities for active learning were provided for students in all lessons, which is good practice. This was most effective where students were encouraged to consider and critically evaluate issues during activity based learning, and where sufficient time for plenary sessions was provided. To ensure that students benefit fully from activities facilitated in lessons, the experiential learning cycle should be utilised in the approach to exploring topics.
- Students generally engaged well in collaborative learning, which was facilitated in all lessons. Some further refinement of the skills associated with group-work, such as greater structure to the activity, should yield more effective learning for students.
- Classroom management was good overall, and a good rapport was noted between teachers and students. Students worked purposefully in most lessons, and contributed well to class discussion. This was most evident in lessons where tasks were differentiated to meet their needs.
- In most lessons students' attention was drawn verbally to the class contract developed by the class group. This is good practice. Consideration should be given to keeping the contract on display in classrooms to remind students of their responsibilities, particularly in relation to sensitive topics, and where students are sharing personal views and information in front of their peers.
- Systems for students to record and store their work varies from group to group. The majority of student work is recorded in workbooks, and at times in copybooks and worksheets. Good practice was noted where student work was consistently set and monitored by the class teacher, and where written formative feedback was also provided. In some instances work completed by individual and by groups of students was kept by the class teachers. All teachers should adopt these practices.
- Commendably, students evaluate their own work through the learning keepsake in their workbooks, and parents are kept informed of student progress, through termly written reports on participation and motivation. This could be enhanced through the inclusion of strategies to improve learning.

### 2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- A good range of whole-school initiatives complements the SPHE programme, however there is significant scope to improve subject provision for SPHE and RSE.
- In junior cycle SPHE is appropriately timetabled for first and second-year students. In senior cycle RSE is provided as a module in Guidance. However, SPHE and RSE are not currently offered to third-year and TY students. The school timetable should be restructured to accommodate the inclusion of required SPHE and RSE provision in line with Circular Letter 27/2008.

- In line with good practice a small team of SPHE teachers is in place. While efforts are made by senior management to allocate teachers with an interest and aptitude for the subject, members of the team vary from year to year. Responsibility for teaching SPHE should be shared more evenly between the teachers allocated, to build expertise and capacity in the subject, and to ensure continuity for students.
- Valuable whole-school initiatives and events, such as *Anti-Bullying Week*, *Mental Health Awareness Week* and the *Wellness* and *Gratitude* walls, are provided to support student wellbeing, and complement the SPHE programme. The school has recently applied to introduce the Amber Flag.
- School management is supportive of continuing professional development (CPD) and most teachers have accessed training provided by the SPHE support service. Commendably, learning from CPD is shared with SPHE teachers through a report from the attendees. All teachers of SPHE should access ongoing training, and should make use of the expertise within the department.
- There is a clear identifiable care team in this school which meets weekly, and some SPHE teachers link with care team informally. Links with SPHE and Guidance are documented in the guidance plan, however these links should be strengthened, as much of the Guidance programme is delivered through SPHE in junior cycle.

### 3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Aspects of the subject department plan are good, such as the inclusion of relevant policies, assessment for learning strategies, and the action plan that has correctly identified areas for improvement. However, the overall quality of planning for SPHE is fair. There is significant scope to develop the planning and review of teaching, learning and assessment practices to meet curricular requirements in SPHE, such as the spiral and incremental nature of the subject.
- The subject plan includes a list of modules for SPHE, however, schemes of work for the subject are not in place, and individual teacher planning is reliant on the textbook. Programmes of work for each year group should be developed collaboratively by the SPHE department. These should reflect the developmental nature of the subject, and should link with the school guidance plan, and the range of supplementary activities in the school calendar which enhance the teaching and learning of SPHE.
- The role of SPHE co-ordinator is attached to the school's schedule of posts, however the co-ordinator is not currently timetabled to teach the subject due to other curricular commitments. Consideration should be given to rotating the role of co-ordinator to build capacity in the SPHE department.

#### **4. CHILD PROTECTION**

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the school's reception area.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principals 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.

## THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is <b>outstanding</b> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;