

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in
Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Saint Oliver Post Primary
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Oldcastle County Meath
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	71990R

Date of Inspection: 26-09-2017



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.

The board of management 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.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	25 and 26 September 2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Saint Oliver Post-Primary School operates under the patronage of Louth Meath Education and Training Board. It caters for 567 male and female students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programmes. Transition Year is an optional programme in this school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning observed in the majority of lessons was satisfactory.
- While content knowledge was well developed in the lessons observed, insufficient time was allocated for the development of attitudes, skills and behaviours.
- Highly effective assessment of student learning was observed in many lessons but there is no agreed practice or policy regarding the assessment of students' written work
- Timetabling provision is very supportive of students' experience of SPHE.
- To date, the majority of SPHE teachers have not been facilitated to attend SPHE in-service courses.
- A subject department plan has been developed but is not being implemented by all teachers.

Recommendations

- All SPHE lessons should provide students with adequate opportunities to develop attitudes, skills and behaviours
- The SPHE department should establish and agree its policy and practices regarding the assessment of students' written work.
- The board and senior management should ensure that all SPHE teachers are provided with opportunities to attend in-service courses.
- The SPHE subject plan should be reviewed regularly by the subject department to ensure that the plan is meeting the needs of all students.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning observed in the majority of lessons was satisfactory.
- Overall, lessons were well sequenced and based on clear learning intentions.
- In most lessons, the dominant focus was on progressing students' knowledge. Consequently, inadequate opportunities were provided for students to develop their attitudes, skills and behaviours. Best practice is that SPHE lessons allow sufficient time for students to process their learning and for them to develop their attitudes, skills and behaviours.
- Good attention was paid to the development of students' literacy skills. For example, key words were integrated into lessons at appropriate stages and reinforced when necessary.
- Effective differentiated questioning strategies, which catered well for the range of students' abilities, were used in a few lessons. Very good practice was seen when students were provided with additional support as required throughout the lesson
- Student learning was well supported by the use of a variety of teaching strategies such as pair work, walking debates and reflective tasks.
- Student engagement during lessons was generally satisfactory. In one lesson, where student engagement was very good, they were provided with many opportunities to collaborate with their peers, interrogate their learning and were able to express themselves with confidence. Consequently, there was a very strong sense of student ownership of their own learning.
- Students' behaviour was very good and lessons were characterised by positive, mutually respectful learning environments. In some cases, the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject contributed to an atmosphere of learning that was vibrant and stimulating.
- Highly effective practice was evident in many lessons when students' learning was assessed in a variety of ways such as questioning, the completion of worksheets and homework assignments. However, there is no policy or established practice regarding the storage and assessment of students' written work. The SPHE department should establish and agree its policy and practices regarding the assessment of students' written work.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The school is very supportive of SPHE as it is timetabled for all year groups in both junior and senior cycles. It is good to note that Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is delivered in senior cycle by the SPHE teaching team.
- The SPHE department is comprised of sixteen teachers: a number of whom are very experienced at teaching the subject. Currently, the SPHE department is coordinated by a member of staff who is not teaching the subject due to other curricular demands. Best practice would be that the coordinator's role is taken by a teacher who is currently teaching the subject.
- It is good practice that the school is making every effort to ensure that teachers remain with their class group throughout the junior and senior cycles. In addition, an effective system is in place whereby the SPHE teacher is also the class tutor to their class, thus increasing daily contact between teachers and students.

- To date, the majority of SPHE teachers have not been facilitated to attend SPHE in-service courses. Notwithstanding the difficulties of releasing teachers due to other training requirements, it is essential that all teachers access SPHE training over time.
- The school places a strong value on the holistic development of students. Very good care structures are in place that are supportive of students in this school. In particular, a number of visual displays relevant to SPHE were evident in classrooms and corridors.
- Policies that are supportive of SPHE, such as the school policy on dealing with bullying, have been developed. It is also very good that the school has established policies and procedures regarding the management of critical incidents.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning and preparation for lessons were generally satisfactory. The dominant resource used in most lessons was the textbook. In a small number of cases, good practice was evident in the use of additional resources which were supportive to the particular class group and integrated effectively into the lesson.
- Formal planning time is generally limited to one meeting of the subject department at the start of the school year. While informal meetings also occur between individual members of the SPHE department, more time should be provided for subject planning.
- An SPHE subject plan containing time-bound programmes of work for all year groups has been developed. However, some topics which are not included in the subject plan are also being taught. While it is good practice that plans can be adapted when necessary, regular reviews of the plan should occur to ensure that the plan is up-to-date and meeting the needs of all students.
- Some subject departments are using the school's information and communication technology (ICT) systems to share resources and planning materials. The SPHE department has yet to avail of these facilities. To support collaborative planning and to facilitate the sharing of resources more efficiently, the SPHE department should optimise the use of the available ICT systems.
- It is good practice that records of meetings are being maintained by the SPHE department and that all teachers retain records of student attendance.
- School reports to parents provide some information on students' progress in SPHE but there is no policy regarding the criteria that are being used. Consistent implementation of such criteria among all teachers would be supported by the development of an agreed policy by the SPHE department.

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

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of St Oliver Post Primary School has reviewed the inspection report on the SPHE Inspection conducted in September 2017 by the Department of Education and Skills. The Board is pleased that the work undertaken by the SPHE department was observed and reported on. The report highlighted the timetabling provision for SPHE and other whole-school structures that are in place to support this subject.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

Recommendation 1

A greater focus on the development of attitudes, skills and behaviours will be targeted by the SPHE department.

Recommendation 2

The SPHE department will address greater commonality in terms of assessment of student work.

Recommendation 3

It is very problematic to release so many teachers for SPHE in-service in light of the difficulties of securing substitute teachers, and the level of ongoing CPD required as part of JCT. Nevertheless, 2 teachers have been signed up for SPHE specific training in November 2017. These teachers will share the learning among other staff members upon their return.

Recommendation 4

The SPHE subject plan will be reviewed regularly.

Other

The school is investigating the procurement of a local intranet to assist with sharing resources among staff. Dual co-ordination is being investigated by the school where by a member of staff would co-ordinate junior SPHE and another member would co-ordinate senior SPHE. Formal opportunities for Subject Planning will be increased through our flexi-time meetings which occur as part of our Croke Park provision.

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
Very Good	Very good 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 outstanding 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
Good	Good 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
Satisfactory	Satisfactory 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
Fair	Fair 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
Weak	Weak 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;