

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

**Mount Sion CBS
Barrack Street, Waterford
Roll number: 64930I**

Date of inspection: 18 May 2011



**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	17 and 18 April 2011
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examination of students' work• Conduct of structured interview with group of senior cycle students• Administration of questionnaire to two groups of third-year students• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was good with many instances of very good practice.
- Lessons were characterised by very good levels of student participation and good opportunities for co-operative learning.
- In most instances, teachers integrated the lesson structure with a very good variety of stimulating tasks for students and very good use of well-chosen visual resources, but there is scope for the further application of the experiential learning cycle.
- Whole-school support is very good, characterised by appropriate timetabling, the provision of time for subject department planning and the cohesive nature of whole-school approaches to student support.
- Subject department planning activity is supportive of development in SPHE and RSE with team approaches and effective leadership provided by a committed co-ordinator.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Development should take place in relation to assessment practices in SPHE and the further expansion of the experiential learning cycle in lessons.
 - All teachers of SPHE and RSE should participate in initial and continuation training.
 - A curricular plan should be drawn up for fifth and sixth year RSE, the RSE policy should reference procedures for consultation with parents and the SPHE curricular plan could be further developed.
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INTRODUCTION

Mount Sion CBS is a secondary school for boys in Waterford City with an enrolment of 186 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). It participates in the Department's DEIS initiative (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) and serves a largely urban catchment area, with students drawn from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds. SPHE is provided on the timetable for one period per week during first, second and third year, as required by circular M11/03. RSE is delivered as a component of SPHE in junior cycle and as a modular component during lessons in Religion in fifth and sixth year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Classrooms were well laid out and the learning environment was very well enhanced for SPHE. In all lessons, teachers made use of the information and communication technology facilities in the classroom.
- Many lessons incorporated a range of excellent visual resources, which added variety and pace to lesson delivery and enhanced student interest in the topics. In a few instances, the wider use of available resources for topics is suggested.
- At all phases of lessons, students were challenged to contribute productively. Teachers adopted an open and facilitative teaching style that enabled students to learn facts, explore their own values and develop their decision-making skills.
- Students were motivated, respectful and interested. They participated fully and engaged according to the tasks assigned, many of which developed their communication skills and self confidence.
- Learning was quite active and productive opportunities for co-operative learning featured in all lessons. In most lessons, teachers planned and integrated into the lesson structure a wide range of stimulating tasks for students; in others, the methodologies used were not as varied and some methodologies may be used too routinely.
- In some instances, good use of appropriate experiential learning methodologies was evident including setting tasks for students to process, generalise and apply their learning. Overall, however, there is scope for the further application of the experiential learning cycle in lessons.
- There is potential to integrate the syllabus learning outcomes in lesson structure; teachers should share the intended learning outcomes with students and use them to reinforce learning at key points.
- Teachers provide an account of students' progress in SPHE on school reports. Work has begun on developing assessment in SPHE, including the introduction of portfolios. The possibility of widening the range of structured approaches to assessment in SPHE, including periodic homework tasks and end-of-module reviews is also being explored. Ongoing work will be necessary to ensure these are embedded in practice.
- There was some evidence of good attention to the development of student literacy in the feedback given by teachers on students' written and oral presentations. As part of subject department planning, it would be worthwhile discussing and establishing consistency of standards for student written work, including longer pieces at times, and linking these standards with the whole-school DEIS plan for literacy.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Support for SPHE and RSE is very good with appropriate timetable allocation in junior and senior cycles and full access for all students.
- Deployment of teachers is very good and those involved profess a long-term interest. RSE is planned and delivered by SPHE teachers and is further supported through the periodic use of guest speakers with preparatory and follow-up lessons delivered by the students' teachers.
- Staff professional development is supported by management and some teachers have engaged in training, including the SPHE co-ordinators' course. However, not all SPHE or RSE teachers have participated in recent training. Participation in initial and continuation training is strongly recommended for all teachers and this should be directly addressed.
- Policies on SPHE and RSE reflect the school's ethos and aim to enable learners to think and act in moral, caring and responsible ways. School structures and policies are co-ordinated, facilitating the principles of SPHE to inform practice at whole-school level as well as in-class level, involving teachers, year heads, home-school-community liaison and guidance as well as cross-curricular links. However, there is no student council and the school recognises this as an area for development.
- Parents are consulted about aspects of delivery of SPHE and RSE. It also is practice to provide written information for parents about the programmes including the RSE topics presented by guest speakers. This practice should be referenced within the RSE policy.
- An extensive and audited range of resources for teachers and students is accessible and continually expanding. Teachers vary the chosen resources and texts for topics according to the needs and characteristics of the class group.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The SPHE department meets regularly and meetings focus on review and evaluation of the programmes, methodologies and resources. The appointment of a co-ordinator for SPHE has proven pivotal to development and is enabling good levels of collaboration and progression through team planning.
- Subject planning is ongoing and SPHE curricular plans have been developed for each year group. Curriculum plans are appropriately adapted for JCSP students and include methodologies that cater for a wide range of learning styles. In developing the curricular plans, the syllabus learning outcomes for each year group should be integrated and agreed assessment procedures should be developed and added to the plans.
- A programme for senior cycle RSE has been drawn up. The programme is developmental and in line with Department guidelines. A curricular plan should now be developed for senior cycle RSE; the plan should integrate desired learning outcomes for each year group with teaching and learning methodologies, resources and assessment procedures.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the 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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Published December 2011.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Mount Sion, C.B.S. welcomes the very positive report on the teaching and learning of S.P.H.E. and R.S.E. in the school and wishes to compliment the teaching staff on the good practice and high standard of teaching observed by the inspector on her visit.

The Board wishes to compliment the Principal, Mr. John McArdle, on the whole school support and the active involvement of the staff in department planning, development and leadership for S.P.H.E. and R.S.E. within the school.

The Board would like to compliment the Inspector, on the professional and courteous manner in which the inspection was carried out.

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 Board will endeavour to carry out any recommendations contained in the report within the resources granted to the school by the D.E.S.