

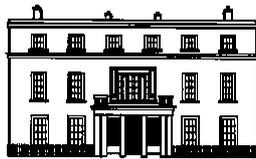
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

**Our Lady's School
Templeogue Road,
Terenure, Dublin 6W
Roll number: 60860Q**

Date of inspection: 24 October 2013



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

**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	24 October 2013
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal• Meetings with teachers and co-ordinators• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to senior management and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in all lessons was good or very good with effective use of student-centred tasks and high levels of productive student participation.
- Curricular provision for junior cycle SPHE has commendable aspects but the deployment and continuous professional development (CPD) of SPHE teachers requires attention.
- Whole-school promotion of well-being and personal development is tangible, and the school provides very stimulating learning environments in classrooms and general areas.
- Good planning documents are in place for SPHE and RSE but the school should review subject planning practices and make provision for collaborative programme planning and evaluation.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- All SPHE teachers should base their lesson planning on the syllabus and the agreed subject plan and diversify more from textbook use in lesson delivery and assessment.
 - Senior management should establish and maintain a small core team of specialist and long-term teachers for SPHE.
 - The immediate participation in training for SPHE for all teachers deployed to the subject should be prioritised by management and ongoing training in the subject and its modules, including RSE, should be systematic.
 - Management should review the school's subject planning structures to enable SPHE subject department meetings to take place.
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INTRODUCTION

Our Lady's School is a voluntary secondary school for girls with a current enrolment of 762. The school provides the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate programmes.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching and learning in all lessons was either good or very good and many examples of effective practice were observed. Teachers used a variety of methodologies. Teachers facilitated student-centred approaches to learning and provided opportunities for good quality active and collaborative learning. This is highly commended.
- The level of student participation was very high. Student contributions were notable and they demonstrated very good abilities in communication and working with others.
- The experiential learning cycle was evident in the lessons visited and the application of the learning element was well promoted, for example, through the use of case studies to evoke students' personal reactions and to identify possible solutions to real-life scenarios. The use of teacher-generated information and communication technology (ICT) resources and very good teacher questioning also supported and deepened learning.
- The lessons observed had a clear focus and the pace and tasks presented enabled purposeful progression in most lessons. It became evident, however, that there may be a repetition rather than a development in learning in some aspects of themes from first year to third year and a leaning towards over-dependency on the textbook. It is recommended that this be addressed through collaborative subject planning and evaluation. Also, teachers should draw more from the school's subject plan and the SPHE syllabus when planning lessons.
- Room layouts facilitated collaborative learning and good teacher circulation. Students were familiar with group work dynamics, easily arranging themselves into these settings and assuming roles within the group.
- The quality of teacher-student relationships and teacher encouragement was very good.
- Assessment was generally conducted through teacher evaluation of students' participation and application in tasks and some use of student reflection exercises. Assessment approaches were not uniform and assessment in SPHE could be developed. The learning opportunities that could be provided through the use of home tasks and the use of written work for a variety of purposes in SPHE should be discussed among teachers.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Curricular provision for SPHE and RSE has commendable aspects: SPHE is provided for one class period per week to all junior cycle class groups; in fifth and sixth year, students participate in six-week module in RSE during time set aside from their timetabled religion classes and this is delivered by a teacher trained in senior cycle RSE, and; an eight-week personal development module is provided in TY.
- There is considerable scope for improvement in teacher deployment to the teaching of SPHE: almost all of those deployed are not trained in the subject and it is the class group's form teacher that is assigned. This model of deployment has significant shortcomings as the teachers involved have very little opportunity for regular engagement with the core concepts or teaching approaches. While a teacher trained in junior cycle RSE is made

available to 'substitute in' for the RSE module at the form teacher's request, this does not fully support an integrated approach to learning in SPHE.

- In order to build capacity and expertise, it is recommended therefore that, from the coming school year onward, senior management establishes a small core team of specialist teachers who have participated in the training for SPHE and deploys them regularly to the subject. The immediate participation in training for SPHE for all teachers deployed to the subject should be prioritised and ongoing training in the subject and its modules, including RSE, should be systematic.
- A number of teachers have undertaken training in RSE and this provides valuable internal expertise which is availed of in SPHE and other school support structures.
- There are very good whole-school structures and policies for the promotion of health, and well-being and for moral, social and personal development. Crucially, these messages are also visibly promoted in the school's vibrant learning environment through posters and information boards and through the tangible positive school culture and climate. It is recommended that the school extends the very good work in this area by considering the adoption of the Health Promoting School initiative.
- The school's anti-bullying policy has many very good aspects but should be immediately reviewed so that the school fully complies with the Department's new Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools and the associated Circular 0045/2013.
- A good collection of SPHE and RSE resources in a range of themes is available in a central storage area, electronically on the computer network and through the school's website. The development of a system to enable the regular evaluation and review of the range of resources is suggested. Systematic engagement with CPD will ensure continuous expansion and updating of the set of resources.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Currently, there is no subject planning structure to facilitate SPHE teachers to meet and this should be addressed. While school management has designated a liaison teacher in addition to a subject convenor to communicate with teachers and encourage them to access shared resources, and this effort is acknowledged, management should now review the whole-school subject planning provision and take steps to establish a SPHE subject department. Ideally, two meetings should be scheduled annually – one to discuss the subject plan and pedagogical approaches and a second for evaluation and review.
- A complete subject plan for SPHE has been developed but the extent to which it is used as a working document by SPHE teachers is inconsistent. The subject plan successfully outlines the aims, resources, teaching and learning methodologies advocated but could more usefully expand on assessment practices and provide for deeper literacy experiences in the subject. Commendably, the subject plan sets out to optimise learning through active methodologies and links with other school activities such as mental health initiatives and friendship events.
- In reviewing the subject plan annually, it is suggested that teachers choose a theme (e.g. bullying) and track that theme through the plan for first, second and third year and evaluate whether it is sufficiently developmental in nature and links to whole-school policy.
- Commendably, the school has a single developmental curriculum plan for RSE that progresses the required themes in relationships and sexuality from first year to sixth year.

The programme draws on current important health education resources including the TRUST materials and the B4Udecide website.

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 of the school 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.

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 Our Lady's School welcomes the findings of the report and the positive affirmation of the quality of teaching and learning, the curricular provision for SPHE, the high level of student participation and the tangible whole school promotion of wellbeing and personal development.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

School Management will review the school's subject planning structures with a view to enabling:

- The SPHE department meetings to take place.
- The development of a core SPHE team.
- The provision of in-service training opportunities for SPHE and RSE teachers.