

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Coláiste Cholmáin
Claremorris, County Mayo
Roll number: 64610N**

Date of inspection: 11 May 2011



AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SOCIAL, PERSONAL AND
HEALTH EDUCATION (SPHE)

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	10 and 11 May 2011
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussions with principal, co-ordinator, teachers• Review of relevant documents• Interaction with students• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examination of students' work• Conduct of structured interview with senior cycle students• Administration of questionnaire to third-year students• Feedback to principal, deputy principal, teachers and subject co-ordinator

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in SPHE was good with some excellent examples of the use of experiential learning evident.
- A supportive and caring classroom atmosphere, characterised by positive student-teacher rapport, was evident.
- Students were conscientious and demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of topics appropriate to their level.
- There is very good whole-school support and appropriate timetable provision for SPHE.
- It is very good practice that discrete time for whole-team SPHE meetings is provided for during staff planning days.
- Subject planning in SPHE is good, with some scope for development.
- The SPHE team has shown considerable capacity for self-evaluation and improvement.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The SPHE curricular plans should be further developed as necessary. Action planning will assist the SPHE team in achieving their priority goals.
 - Assessment procedures as documented in the subject plan should be reviewed with a view to formulating policy in this important area.
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INTRODUCTION

The Archdiocese of Tuam established Coláiste Cholmáin in 1945 as an all-boys diocesan secondary school. It is the only school for boys in its catchment area and there is a current enrolment of 357 students. Coláiste Cholmáin continues a long tradition of supporting its students through health education and effective pastoral care structures, in line with the school's ethos.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in SPHE is good, with exceptionally good facilitation of experiential learning observed in a number of lessons. Students were carefully guided through the required steps of experiencing, processing, generalising and applying their learning. Appropriate use of such activities as brainstorming, reflection, discussion, moving debate, pair work and group work were evident.
- Where best practice was observed, lessons were planned to serve specific learning outcomes which were shared at the beginning of lessons and returned to at the lesson closure.
- Lessons were well planned, structured and sequenced, and delivered at a pace that allowed students time to engage with and reflect on the key concepts of the lesson.
- There was very good use of targeted questioning to test student knowledge, to elicit information from students and to challenge them to reflect on the topic.
- There is excellent provision of information and communication technology (ICT). Teachers make very good use of ICT in planning and to produce a variety of teaching resources; however, there is scope for greater incidental use of ICT to enhance teaching and consolidate learning in SPHE.
- In keeping with best practice, some opportunities were provided for students to acquire knowledge and understanding, balanced with time for reflection on behaviour, attitudes and values and this is fully encouraged.
- On occasion, visiting speakers are invited to supplement SPHE classes and teachers carefully evaluate such inputs.
- In all lessons observed, students were conscientious and eager to participate in class activities. Teachers consistently welcomed students' contributions and affirmed their responses well. This contributed to a supportive and caring atmosphere, characterised by positive student-teacher rapport.
- Students worked well both individually and collaboratively and demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the concepts related to the various topics, appropriate to their level. This was evident from their answers to questions, class discussions and the completion of tasks. Students' copybooks and folders indicate good progression in their work.
- Assessment in SPHE is viewed as part of the activity of teaching and learning and teachers use a combination of assessment modes to assess students' progress in SPHE. The teachers have plans to explore and further develop the area of assessment in SPHE and in particular to develop the reflective portfolio as a form of assessment.
- The findings of students' questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with SPHE.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good whole-school support for SPHE. Appropriate timetable provision is made for SPHE, including the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme which is provided as an integral part of junior cycle SPHE. Senior cycle students undertake a twelve-class-period RSE module which is delivered in the context of Religious Education. The provision of two classes of Personal Development, including RSE, in the Transition Year (TY) programme is also commendable.
- In line with best practice, a core team is involved in SPHE delivery and they display a high level of commitment. The role of SPHE co-ordinator is well established and undertaken on a voluntary basis by a teacher who has considerable experience in teaching SPHE.
- Management appreciates the benefits that ensue when the SPHE teacher also teaches the class for another subject. Every effort is made to ensure that there is a gender balance in the deployment of SPHE teachers. Management should, when possible, seek for continuity of teacher for individual class groups.
- The school's engagement with SPHE-related training is very impressive and includes great commitment from the principal and deputy principal who have both availed of training. A register of SPHE-related training is maintained, including the dates training was undertaken by individuals. Whole-staff in-service has also been provided in a range of SPHE-related topics.
- There are various student-support structures which provide a cohesive and strong network of supports for students. Whole-school initiatives, such as the pastoral care team, Guidance, class tutors, prefects and the anti-bullying initiatives, support students well.
- Students have a strong social conscience as demonstrated through their voluntary work in the local community. The SPHE notice board is strategically located as a support for students.
- The school informs parents of students' progress in SPHE appropriately through school reports, letters and annual parent-teacher meetings.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The SPHE team engages in collaborative planning and formal meetings of teachers of the specific year groups are scheduled once per term. It is very good practice that discrete time for whole-team SPHE meetings is provided for during staff planning days.
- A comprehensive SPHE subject plan has been developed by the co-ordinator, in addition to various SPHE planning folders. Long-term curricular plans, which outline the areas of work to be covered with each year group, were also presented and these are revised annually.
- While many of the curricular plans include the learning outcomes to be attained, these should be included in all plans. Time frames for the teaching of topics, the corresponding methodologies and agreed assessment modes should also be included as necessary. Plans should also include a review mechanism to support teachers in undertaking end-of-year reviews.

- The outline TY, fifth-year and sixth-year RSE plans should now be further developed in line with the junior cycle plan, to reflect the requirements of circular 23/10 and be included in an updated RSE policy.
 - The SPHE team has shown considerable capacity for self evaluation and improvement. Regular review of SPHE provision includes the views of students, teachers and parents and this leads to regular goal setting. The next step for the team is the development and implementation of action plans, including performance indicators, designed to appraise progress in achieving these goals.
 - The current assessment procedures as documented in the subject plan should be reviewed with a view to formulating policy in this important area.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teachers 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 BOM at St Colman's College would like to express its sincere appreciation for the constructive advice and recommendations and affirmation of best practice observed by the Inspector during our programme evaluation. The Board wishes to acknowledge the work and commitment of school staff and the SPHE team in particular as evidenced in the report.

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

In response to the recommendations the Board of Management would like to make the following points:

- **In response to Point 3 of Planning and Preparation, Page 4, regarding learning outcomes, timeframes etc:** With the introduction of the new (North Western Health Board) N.W.H.B. books and programme for SPHE a provisional plan has been set up and is being implemented incorporating reviews at each team meeting . To date it is working well. The Coordinator has now developed a review booklet following advice from the inspectorate which will assist end of year review by the team and class handover.