

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**F.C.J. Secondary School  
Bunclody, Co. Wexford  
Roll number: 63550Q**

**Date of inspection: 16 May 2014**



**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)**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	16 May 2014
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</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 teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good.
- Lessons were conducted in a welcoming, supportive and affirming atmosphere.
- Students were observed to value their SPHE lessons and were actively engaged through a range of interactive tasks.
- SPHE, including Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), is appropriately provided for all students.
- The principles of SPHE are integrated through a range of whole-school policies and initiatives that serve to promote the health and well-being of the school community.
- The quality of subject department and individual teacher planning for SPHE is very good.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The further development of the assessment process should be explored to reflect and record students' learning.
  - The further exploration of the experiential learning process should be considered by the subject department.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

F.C.J. Secondary School is a coeducational post-primary school, with a current enrolment of 768 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, a Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good.
- A welcoming, supportive and affirming atmosphere was a common characteristic of all lessons observed. A climate of trust, respect and safety underpinned these SPHE lessons and contributed to high levels of student engagement in the learning tasks.
- Teachers were well prepared for their lessons, with all materials and resources readily available. When used, information and communications technology (ICT) provided an excellent stimulus for students to engage with the topic. This was particularly effective in a lesson on homophobic bullying, where a powerful YouTube music video provided an excellent focus for reflection and discussion.
- The structure and pace of lessons ensured that students were engaged in purposeful tasks designed to deepen their understanding of the focused topics. Opportunities for social learning were an integral component of the instructional repertoire used by teachers. Students were confident in articulating and rationalising their opinions and demonstrated good competency in critically engaging with the focused topics.
- The topics covered included bullying and substance use. The timing of lessons on bullying to coincide with the school's anti-bullying week is very good practice.
- In some lessons, teachers explicitly highlighted the key learning intentions following an introduction to the topic. This effective practice provided students with a clear focus for their learning. The extension of this approach to all lessons is recommended, where appropriate.
- Very good links were established between students' previous learning and the focused topics, through open discussion, brainstorming and questioning. Most lessons involved students examining their own perceptions, opinions or behaviours related to the topic, which is very good practice.
- A number of interactive tasks were used effectively, including self-reflection, role play, pair and group work. Most elements of the experiential learning cycle were visible in lessons. Of particular note was one lesson where students participated in role play, reviewed and discussed a case study on the impact of social exclusion, and examined the implications of this behaviour to their own setting. Consideration should be given by the SPHE department to further exploring the pedagogical power of the experiential learning process.
- Teachers used questioning to good effect to encourage students' contributions to class discussion and to assess and extend their learning. Teachers endeavoured to include all students through targeted and differentiated questioning. To build on this good practice, ways of increasing the frequency of students' asking questions, of each other and of their teacher, should be explored. This may involve, posing open-ended questions that require deliberation and discussion, in pairs or small groups.
- Teachers ensured that key points were effectively summarised at the conclusion of the lesson, which helped to consolidate learning. In some cases, students were given a short period of time at the end to reflect on their learning, which is also good practice.

- Elements of assessment were incorporated into each lesson through the completion of assignments in the students' textbooks, worksheets and through questioning. The inclusion of project work and assignments on occasion present valuable opportunities to assess students' understanding of the focused topics. Good practice was observed where students maintained a file for their SPHE work. To build on this good practice, consideration should be given to identifying and implementing an agreed number of assessment tasks for each year group, that would reflect students' learning across a number of defined outcomes.
- Students stated they value the subject and feel it contributes to the development of positive, health-related attitudes and behaviours.
- Reporting to parents on students' progress is in line with school procedures and it is good practice that teachers of SPHE are available at parent-teacher meetings.

### **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- SPHE, including RSE, is appropriately provided for all junior cycle students, in accordance with Circular Letter M11/03. A comprehensive RSE programme is provided for senior cycle students. The provision of a dedicated weekly period for Personal Development for TY students, also gives expression to the value placed on the principles of SPHE by the school community.
- A core team of interested and committed teachers has been established and deployed to teach the subject. There is a good engagement by teachers in continuing professional development (CPD). The role of guest-speakers and the procedures for their inclusion to complement the SPHE and RSE programmes are in keeping with good practice.
- The SPHE programme is supported by a number of relevant policies, which provide excellent guidance to the school community on substance use, RSE and anti-bullying. The school's approach to anti-bullying in particular is an excellent example of best practice.
- The majority of SPHE teachers are based in their own classrooms, with ready access to resources to effectively engage and support students' learning. Whilst the classrooms visited were suitable to accommodate a range of interactive methodologies, some consideration should be given to trialling alternative layout of the furniture.
- SPHE is an integral component of the pastoral care structures and supports in the school. This is a significant strength of the programme, which is also reflected in the regular calendar of events over the course of the academic year. Whole-school co-curricular programmes are implemented to increase awareness and provide opportunities for students to extend their learning on topics such as bullying, positive nutrition, physical fitness, mental health and well-being. The Nurture programme which supports some students in developing their communication and social skills is exemplary.

### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject department and individual teacher planning for SPHE is very good. Regular meetings and a collaborative approach to programme planning ensures the programmes of work meet the needs of students.
- The SPHE subject plan provides a good overview of the organisation and delivery of the subject in the school. The schemes of work are in keeping with the syllabus and guidelines for teachers.

- Review and reflection inform the development of the SPHE programme. This is particularly so in the senior cycle RSE programme, where students' feedback is regularly sought to inform the content and delivery of the programme.
- To build on the good work undertaken to date, the SPHE department should identify a number of key learning outcomes for each year group from the syllabus, and align these to an agreed number of assessment tasks.
- The subject department is well resourced, with good use being made of the ICT facilities for planning and storage of a range of resources to support teaching and learning.

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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; a response was not received from the board.