



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) Report

REPORT

School name	St Fiacc's N S
School address	Killeshin Road Graiguecullen Co. Carlow
Roll number	19958C
Date of evaluation	22-11-2022
Date of issue of report	25/01/2023

What is a curriculum evaluation?

Curriculum evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum (1999)* and the *Primary Language Curriculum (2019)*. 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(s) evaluated learning and teaching in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils' learning
2. Supporting pupils' learning through learner experiences and teachers' practice
3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

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 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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the <i>Procedures</i>) since the previous report to the board.3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	22-11-2022
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and relevant teachers• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal and teachers

School context

St Fiacc's National School is a co-educational primary school situated in Graiguecullen, on the outskirts of Carlow town. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. It participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan for educational inclusion of the Department of Education. At the time of the evaluation there were 593 pupils enrolled in the school. In terms of teaching staff, there were twenty-four mainstream teachers, eleven support teachers, a home-school-community liaison co-ordinator (HSCL), an administrative deputy and principal, employed at the school.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning was very good; pupils displayed increasing levels of confidence in discussing and using the skills and strategies they have learned in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) as they progress throughout the school.
- The learning experiences of the pupils were very good; pupils in all classes were given regular opportunities to use a number of effective strategies to support their learning in SPHE.
- The overall quality of teachers' individual practice was very good, there was notable levels of consistency among teachers in the content they covered, their lesson structure and their methodologies.
- Highly effective assessment practices were in evidence in all classes; pupils' voices were included in the creation of the records and data collected was meaningfully used to support pupils' learning.
- The quality of school planning in SPHE was very good. Collaboration between teachers was highly embedded and there was a generous spirit of sharing ideas and expertise between teachers.

Recommendations

- As a means of further deepening pupils' understanding of ideas and concepts being explored, all teachers should plan and deliver SPHE lessons, which are contextualised to the pupils' lives.
- Teachers should explicitly teach and display new language and subject-specific language during SPHE lessons, in order to further support pupils' language learning.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

The overall quality of pupils' learning was very good. Pupils demonstrated high levels of enjoyment and engagement during SPHE lessons. They displayed increasing levels of confidence in their understanding of the skills and strategies of SPHE as they progress throughout the school.

During classroom observations, pupils could recall previous learning and discussed a range of topics such as fire safety, healthy eating, conflict resolution techniques and how to stay safe in an online space. Pupils spoke about being unique and the value of being different. Pupils were observed discussing challenging content using subject-specific language in a calm and engaged manner. In most classes, pupils could identify how they used their learning in SPHE outside of school. During the focus group discussion, pupils spoke about how useful their learning in SPHE was in helping them to manage their everyday lives. Pupils were aware that the school was explicitly teaching them strategies to be kind to each other and to themselves. They reported that they were given opportunities to make choices in their learning and to have their opinion heard by teachers and the principal.

2. Supporting pupils' learning: Learner experiences and teachers' practice

The learning experiences of the pupils were highly effective. There was a very positive school climate and it was evident that there was a shared responsibility among the staff and pupils for maintaining this strong school culture. The school's physical environment was maintained to a very high standard and this reflected a calm and orderly atmosphere. During the focus group discussion, a number of pupils who had transferred to the school spoke about how they were welcomed to the school and supported as they made friends.

The school had an extensive co curricular and extra-curricular afterschool programmes and they actively identified activities that would make pupils feel good and experience success. The code of behaviour has been recently adapted to provide pupils with opportunities to acknowledge and recognise unwanted behaviour and teach them strategies to repair damage caused by this type of behaviour.

Pupils engaged in lessons based on a wide range of suitable content, including respecting each other, developing healthy habits and growing self-confidence. Across the school and in classrooms there were high quality displays to support pupils learning in SPHE, in the best instances, these displays were labelled with subject-specific language and teachers used the displays during lessons to embed and guide learning. This effective practice should be extended to all settings. Teachers should explicitly teach and display new language and subject-specific language during SPHE lessons. New language should be connected to visual aids, when practical, to support learners in their language learning.

There were a number of whole-school approaches for SPHE, such as breathing strategies, affirmations, journaling and fundamental movement skills which were used consistently in each classroom. The pupils in the focus group discussion confirmed that they were aware of these approaches and used them in their lives, both inside and outside of school.

The overall quality of teachers' individual practice was very good, practice ranged from good to very good. One of the most noteworthy aspects of provision at the school was the level of consistency in teaching approaches, methodologies and content among teachers. In all classes, teachers were clear communicators, lessons were well structured and teachers shared the learning intention with pupils at the outset of the lesson.

The school was following a number of programmes to support the teaching of the SPHE curriculum. In many cases, lessons were meaningfully integrated across the curriculum in order to support pupils' learning. In the best instances, teachers taught an abstract concept, such as

how to make a friend, and they outlined specific strategies that the pupils could use to help them deal with this situation in their own lives. This highly effective practice should be extended to all classes. As a means of further deepening pupils' understanding of ideas and concepts being explored, all teachers should plan and deliver SPHE lessons, which are contextualised to the pupils' lives.

Highly effective assessment practices were in evidence in all classes. Pupils' progress was recorded in SPHE copybooks. Pupils in a number of classes used digital tools to create portfolios. Teachers in other classes used information and communications technology (ICT) to create videos to show pupils how to deal with emerging social situations, such as how to find a different friend to play with on the yard. Assessment practices were highly praised as they consciously included pupils' voices in the creation of the assessment records and data gathered was used to support pupils' learning.

In lessons observed, support for pupils with special education needs (SEN) in SPHE was exemplary. A number of pupils were given time each morning to engage in a pupil-led social group. They were given opportunities to identify and discuss their feelings in a secure and caring environment. The teachers worked to provide the pupils with strategies to help them to regulate their emotions and cope during the school day. This practice was highly praised.

3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

Planning for SPHE was highly effective. There was a whole-school long term plan for each class group, with delineated content for each month. These plans supported the simultaneous implementation of teaching and learning in the subject across the school. Collaboration between teachers was highly embedded. Teachers consistently planned their lessons and units of work together in class groups. This approach to collaborative planning and teaching provided teachers with opportunities to regularly meet and share good practice. It was evident from interactions with staff that there was a generous spirit of sharing ideas and expertise, which was highly commended.

The principal and in-school management team (ISM) were highly praised for the organisation of teaching and learning in SPHE. Careful decisions about initiatives and whole-school approaches have been taken in a measured and thoughtful way. Curricular leadership was provided to teachers through regular meetings and communication between teachers and the principal which, highlight priority areas to be covered and ongoing commitments to changing practice in the area of SPHE.

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 quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	<i>Very good</i> 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 <i>outstanding</i> 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	<i>Good</i> 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	<i>Satisfactory</i> 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	<i>Fair</i> 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	<i>Weak</i> 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;

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 welcomes the findings and recommendations of the SPHE curriculum evaluation of St. Fiacc's NS. The Board acknowledges the description of the quality of pupils' learning, the learning experiences of the pupils, the quality of teachers' individual practice and the quality of school planning as very good. Furthermore the board commends the staff on building a very positive school climate and recognises the efforts of the teachers to enhance the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at St. Fiacc's NS, in particular the exemplary support for pupils with special education needs.

Additionally the board appreciates the recognition of the high standard maintenance of the school's physical environment which facilitates a calm and orderly atmosphere at St. Fiacc's. Finally the board welcomes the recommendations as an opportunity to further improve the delivery of the SPHE programme at St. Fiacc's.

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

The Board of Management will give careful consideration to the two recommendations of the Inspectorate in the area of supporting pupils' learning; learner experiences and teachers' practice.

The first recommendation is that all teachers should plan and deliver SPHE lessons, which are contextualised to the pupils' lives.

To this end the staff will undertake the following actions:

- Teachers will integrate the concepts, skills and strategies taught during the SPHE lessons across the curriculum and outside of the classroom context. These concepts, skills and strategies will be reinforced in small group SEN settings.
- When teaching an abstract concept during the SPHE lesson, the teacher will outline specific strategies that the pupils can use to manage certain situations in their own lives. These strategies will form part of the school's whole school approach to SPHE and wellbeing.

The second recommendation is that teachers should explicitly teach and display new language and subject specific language during SPHE lessons, in order to further support pupils' language learning. To achieve this recommendation the staff will undertake the following actions:

- Teachers will maintain high quality displays in classrooms to support pupil learning in SPHE. These displays will be labeled with subject specific language and will be used during lessons to embed and guide learning.
- Teachers will explicitly teach and display new language and subject specific language during SPHE lessons. This new language shall be connected to visual aids, when practical, to support learners in their language learning.