An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Marist College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Retreat Road Athlone Co. Westmeath
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	63190M

Date of Inspection: 23-01-2019

An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

SUBJECT INSPECTION

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. 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 evaluated learning and teaching in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

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.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

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.

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

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	22-01-2019 - 23-01-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students	• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Marist College is an all boys' voluntary secondary school, under the trusteeship of the Marist Brothers. With an enrolment of 502 boys, the school offers the Junior Cycle Framework, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Established Leaving Certificate, and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning in the majority of lessons observed was good or very good.
- Teachers facilitated active and collaborative learning in all lessons; however use of the experiential learning cycle is not fully developed.
- Very good examples of formative assessment were noted in many lessons, but overall, assessment practices are not consistent.
- Subject provision and whole-school support for SPHE is good.
- The SPHE team is larger than optimal, and the majority of teachers are not consistently timetabled for the subject or the class group.
- A highly committed subject co-ordinator oversees good quality planning for SPHE; however schemes of work in junior cycle are generally reliant on the textbook.

Recommendations

- SPHE teachers should maximise use of the experiential learning cycle to develop students' attitudes, values and behaviours related to the topic, and the skills to apply their learning in new situations.
- The SPHE department should adopt agreed systems to store, monitor and assess students' work, including provision of regular written formative feedback, and consistent opportunities for students to reflect on their learning.
- Senior management should establish a smaller SPHE core team with the requisite training, to ensure continuity for students and to build teachers' expertise.
- SPHE teachers should further develop junior cycle schemes of work to include teaching methodologies and assessment approaches that match the learning needs of individual class groups, with less reliance on the textbook.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good or very good.
- Learning intentions were shared with students in all lessons. This good practice was most effective where the learning intentions were referenced during the lesson and reviewed to consolidate learning. In line with the school's self-evaluation strategy, this approach should be extended to all lessons.
- Lessons were well prepared. A wide range of relevant teaching resources, such as engaging video clips and handouts, was generally utilised well in lessons. The use of textbooks varied, and was most effective where it was appropriately balanced with high quality teacher-generated materials, or those sourced by the teacher to meet the needs of the individual class group.
- Good classroom management was observed in all lessons and teachers provided clear instructions for tasks and activities. Overall, SPHE is taught in an atmosphere of mutual respect, and the qualities of care and tolerance, underpinning the school's mission statement, were key features in lessons observed.
- In line with good practice, active and experiential learning opportunities were facilitated by teachers through a range of individual and group activities such as walking debates, role-plays and whole-group discussions. Good practice was noted where teachers provided sufficient time for students to process and reflect on their learning from the active phase of the lesson; and were facilitated to share and discuss this learning to form a broader view of the topic. To build on this, all teachers should maximise use of the experiential learning cycle by allowing time for students to consider how their learning might influence their attitudes, values and behaviours related to the topic, and how they may apply this learning in new situations.
- Teachers facilitated collaborative work in all lessons. This was most effective where they implemented structures, such as timeframes for completion of tasks, and in one lesson where the classroom layout was rearranged to facilitate face-to-face discussion. Structures to maximise learning and participation in meaningful student collaboration should be extended to all lessons.
- Elements of assessment were incorporated into all lessons observed, mainly through questioning, and feedback from students during plenary sessions after activities. In many lessons very good formative assessment strategies, such as exit slips and mini-whiteboards were used to assess students' knowledge, understanding and opinions. However such approaches were not consistent. In most lessons teachers provided students with good verbal formative feedback. These approaches should be further developed and extended to all lessons.
- Teachers assigned homework for students to reflect on their learning in most lessons observed. However, a review of students' work and homework journals indicated that homework is not consistently assigned or completed and that the quality and quantity of student work varied. There was no evidence of monitoring or teacher feedback on written work. Teachers should now provide regular written formative feedback on key pieces of work, and consistent opportunities for students to reflect on their own learning.
- Teachers take a range of approaches to storing students' work. In some instances students maintain a folder, while others keep work in their bags or lockers. It is recommended that all teachers adopt agreed systems to store, monitor and assess students' work and progress.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole-school support for SPHE is good overall.
- Timetabled provision for SPHE, including relationship and sexuality education (RSE), for all students is in line with the requirements of Circular Letter M11/03.
- A large team of teachers is responsible for the delivery of SPHE and timetabling is based mainly on teacher availability. While senior management endeavours to allocate classes to those with expertise and an aptitude for SPHE, the majority of teachers are not consistently timetabled for the subject or the class group. Senior management should establish a smaller core team with the requisite training for the delivery of SPHE and RSE, to ensure greater continuity for students and to build expertise within the team.
- The school promotes students' wellbeing through a range of means including guest speakers on mental health and cyber safety, and initiatives such as the Wellbeing Wall. Commendably, student leadership in this context is promoted through the GAA Future Leaders TY programme and the fifth-year Marist Student Leadership programme.
- School management and staff reported that continuing professional development is facilitated, and uptake by a few teachers in a range of subject-related areas is very good. A minority of the SPHE team has accessed the requisite subject-specific training. This should be addressed.
- Relevant whole-school policies have been developed including wellbeing and RSE policies. The RSE policy, which is currently under review, should now document provision for all year groups.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A highly committed co-ordinator effectively oversees all planning work, including the development of a subject plan, and schemes of work for delivery of curricular content for junior cycle and TY SPHE. Consideration should be given to rotating this position to build leadership capacity in the SPHE department.
- The overall quality of planning for SPHE is good. Senior management facilitates subject-department planning meetings annually, and the school's online sharing platform provides further opportunities for collaborative planning.
- Teachers have developed plans for the new junior cycle short course, including schemes of work that outline learning outcomes for each strand and unit, and methodologies to deliver content, and assess learning. In line with good practice, these are spiral and developmental, however they are largely dependent on the textbook. To build on this, planning for teaching and assessment approaches should be further developed to match the needs of individual class groups, with less reliance on the textbook.
- A senior cycle RSE module is in place as part of the Religious Education programme. In line with good practice, this is a distinct module encompassing all required elements.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the 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.

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	***Very good*** 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 ***outstanding*** 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	***Good*** 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 *very good* standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	***Satisfactory*** 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	***Fair*** 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	***Weak*** 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

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school management and members of the SPHE/RSE Team in Marist College, welcome the report. We are very happy with the many positive comments and commendations contained in the report and feel that the report reflects the huge effort and work put into the teaching of SPHE and RSE by the teaching team involved. We welcome the constructive recommendations contained in the report and will take steps to implement these findings and recommendations.

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

Going forward senior management will focus on areas like experiential learning which we feel will enhance teaching and learning in the school.

As part of our SSE, there is a focus on the area of formative feedback, we expect this will address the issue going forward. In addition, the SPHE core team will use their subject planning time to adopt a collective approach to the storing, monitoring and assessment of students work.

Senior management when planning the curriculum for 2019/20 are committed to ensuring that the SPHE core team reduces in size and where possible allow continuity. In addition, we will support and encourage staff who require relevant CPD training in the area of SPHE.

SPHE teachers as part of pre-planning for 2019-20 will be exploring different methodologies and assessment approaches to ensure that they deliver the SPHE course with less emphasis on the textbook.