An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: SPHE
Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Caherleaheen National School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Cathair Leithin Traighlí Co Chiarraí
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	16917T
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	29-11-2022
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	03/02/2023

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 inspectors 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

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Child Protection</td><td>Anti-bullying</td></tr>
<tr><td>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.</td><td>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013) 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 Procedures) 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.</td></tr>
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The school met all the requirements in relation to child protection checks. The school met the requirements in relation to items 2 and 3 of the anti-bullying checks but did not meet the requirements in relation to item 1 of the anti-bullying checks above.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	29-11-2022
Inspection activities undertaken • Discussion with principal and teachers • Review of relevant documents • Pupil focus-group interview	• Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of pupils' work • Interaction with pupils • Feedback to principal and teachers

School context

Caherleaheen National School is situated close to Tralee in Co. Kerry. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kerry. The school has seven mainstream class teachers and four special education teachers (SETs), one of whom is based in another school. At the time of the evaluation there were 184 pupils enrolled.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of learning outcomes was very good in most lessons.
- A positive, inclusive atmosphere, focused on pupil wellbeing has been embedded in the school; the overall quality of learner experiences was very good.
- The quality of teaching was, for the most part very good; teachers employed a broad range of methodologies and gave very careful consideration to differentiation, in particular for newly enrolled pupils where language was a barrier to learning.
- The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)* but did not meet the requirements in relation to check 1, in that the policy had not been reviewed annually.
- The quality of assessment practices was good.
- The quality of whole-school planning and individual teacher preparation was very good; teachers used the whole-school plan to prepare programmes of learning for pupils.

Recommendations

- In order to impact positively on pupils' learning, assessment practices in SPHE should be extended; systems should be developed and implemented to monitor and record progression.
- Language used in SPHE lessons should be identified in teachers' recorded preparation, displayed in classrooms and used by the pupils to further improve the quality of learning outcomes.
- The school should review its policy on anti-bullying on an annual basis.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

The overall quality of learner outcomes was very good. Pupils were interested and motivated in lessons. Many presented as confident communicators and demonstrated very good capacity to co-operate with each other. They listened to and respected the views of others. They shared their developing understanding of feelings and emotions, healthy living and behaviours, their sense of safety and their ability to protect themselves from dangers. They have been learning to make decisions, solve problems and take actions in various personal, social and health contexts. Pupils

were very knowledgeable on bullying and were clear on the actions to take if they experienced bullying at school or in the community. Pupils' voice was facilitated through the students' council which meets on a weekly basis and uses the school's intercom system to notify all pupils of its work. This council has recently introduced suggestion boxes in all classes from second to sixth and representatives of the council reported that it would discuss and consider all suggestions. To further improve the quality of learner outcomes in SPHE, teachers should place increased focus on subject-specific language. This language should be identified in teachers' recorded preparation, displayed in classrooms and used by the pupils when articulating their learning.

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

The quality of learner experiences was very good overall. A positive inclusive atmosphere, focused on pupil wellbeing was embedded in the school. All teachers, both mainstream and SETs have contributed to a learning environment which supports health and wellbeing and nurtures self-confidence and self-worth among the pupils. Respectful, caring relationships were observed between teachers and pupils and amongst pupils in all settings. This was particularly evident in special education settings where pupils' readiness to learn was assured at the outset of lessons and where very careful attention was afforded to the creation environments which were conducive to learning. The pupils who participated in the focus group reported that they enjoyed their learning in SPHE. They welcomed lessons where they had opportunities to meditate, to respond to their feeling through Art and to engage in collaborative games and tasks. They recounted a range of wellbeing initiatives undertaken in school and expressed particular approval for the weekly activity of lunchtime dancing in the yard.

The quality of teaching was for the most part, very good. Teachers recalled previous learning and shared new learning intentions at the outset of well-structured lessons. They used toys and a broad range of effective methodologies including story and circle time to prompt and maintain pupil engagement. They gave very careful consideration to differentiation, in particular for pupils where language was a barrier to learning. They prepared work sheets in dual languages and used digital technologies to translate instructions for pupils.

Teachers' collective practice was at a very high standard. An agreed whole-school programme for SPHE was consistently implemented. Examination of teachers' recorded preparation and monthly progress reports confirmed a consistent approach to the scheduling of topics in SPHE. Teachers have undertaken an extensive range of continuous professional development courses on wellbeing, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and the Stay Safe Programme. School management facilitated teachers to share their expertise at staff meetings on an array of safety and health promoting initiatives. As a consequence of continuous professional learning and the facility to share this learning, teachers were very well equipped to provide high-quality learning experiences for the pupils.

The quality of assessment practices was good. The school's policy on assessment in SPHE outlined the manner in which teachers would observe progression in learning. This included observation of pupils' capacity to co-operate and work in groups, their emotional development and observation of their ability to access their behaviours. Along with these observations, teachers have retained worksheets completed by the pupils and some photographs of tasks and activities. Teachers should collectively develop a whole-school approach to assessment in SPHE. This approach should be closely aligned with the approaches documented in the school's over-arching policy on assessment. In order to impact positively on pupils' learning in SPHE, systems should be developed and implemented to monitor and record progression in learning. Information gathered should be used to direct future learning experiences for pupils.

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

The quality of whole-school planning and school self-evaluation (SSE) was very good. SPHE was recently selected as the focus for SSE. A broad range of resources to support teaching was gathered, documented and centrally stored for ready accessibility. Teachers engaged in a collaborative planning process. They documented decisions made on planning for SPHE in the minutes of staff meetings and recorded these decisions in the revised whole-school plan. Teachers used this plan to prepare increasingly challenging programmes of learning for pupils as they progressed through the school. Specific learning objectives and learning outcomes were identified for each class grouping and for individual pupils. During the evaluation, the consistent implementation of the revised plan was readily apparent. A second successful element of SSE focussed on widening and deepening integration of newly enrolled pupils into the school community.

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

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management is extremely pleased with the school's recent inspection report. The Board welcomes its affirmations, commendations and recommendations. The report recognises the high standards of teaching and learning, in the various strands of the SPHE curriculum. The findings confirm the high quality of teachers' collaboration when planning and delivering a wide SPHE curriculum leading to a whole-school culture of social and personal wellbeing.
We are especially delighted that the Inspectorate observed and highlighted the embedding of caring, inclusive and respectful relationships between pupils and teachers in our daily interactions and lessons throughout the school.

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 convened to review the school's anti-bullying policy as recommended by the inspectorate. It was ratified soon after our inspection with no material change to its existing content. It will be reviewed annually.

Also, the teaching staff held a meeting to explore and discuss the report. They have highlighted specific modes for the assessment of learning and for learning in SPHE, which correlate with the school's overall assessment policy.

SPHE learning objectives, as expressed through specific vocabulary, and how it can be outlined in teachers' individual planning notes, and highlighted in classroom displays, is planned for a staff meeting in Term 2 of this academic year- '22/23.