An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE)
Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Rockbrook Park School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Edmondstown Road Rathfarnham Dublin 16
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	60321J
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	16-12-2022
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	20/02/2023

What is a 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.

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:	
Child Protection	*Anti-bullying*
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.	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.

The school met all the requirements in relation to child protection checks.

The school met the requirements in relation to checks 2 and 3 of the anti-bullying checks above. The school did not meet the requirements in relation to check 1 of the anti-bullying checks.

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	16-12-2022
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students, including focus groups	• Observation of teaching and learning during three lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Rockbrook Park is a small secondary school in Rathfarnham with the current enrolment of 166 boys. The school operates under the trusteeship of FamEd Ltd. The school offers the Junior Cycle, Leaving Certificate (established), and an optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment observed was very good.
- Lessons were characterised by positive relationships and an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- Very good care structures and a strong emphasis on values contribute to the holistic development of students and support the delivery of SPHE.
- Some good practices regarding subject provision and whole-school support for SPHE are in place, however there is significant scope develop the implementation of aspects of the RSE programme.
- Subject planning has been recently reviewed at junior cycle.

Recommendations

- Subject planning and policy for RSE should be reviewed to ensure that all required elements of junior and senior cycle RSE are delivered in accordance with statutory requirements.
- An audit of SPHE and RSE topics should be undertaken with students to ascertain their knowledge and understanding of all required areas,to determine which elements are in need of further learning, and to plan for the delivery of these topics.
- A discrete module of RSE should be developed for senior cycle and RSE should be integrated with SPHE in junior cycle.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- In the lessons observed the quality of teaching and learning was very good.
- The classroom atmosphere was very positive. Mutually respectful relationships were observed in all lessons, and the students were attentive, cooperative, eager to participate and very insightful at times. Teacher enthusiasm for the subject contributed to an atmosphere of learning that was vibrant and stimulating.
- At the start of lessons, teachers drew students' attention to the planned activities and focus of the lesson. Awareness of the purpose of the lesson and the lesson tasks served to greatly enhance student engagement. In one lesson the learning intentions were co-created. This very good practice should be extended to all lessons and should include discussion of success criteria so that students will know what is required to achieve the stated learning outcomes.
- In all lessons teachers made very good links with prior learning so that students were reminded of the developmental nature of the course. This very good practice emphasised the incremental and spiral nature of SPHE.
- Very good practice was noted in all lessons where the learning focus was inclusive of the knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values that would be gained or developed by lesson end.
- A range of highly effective supplementary class materials such as worksheets, presentations and video clips was provided by teachers to underpin the learning and to provide context for students. In a few lessons video clips were used to very good effect,where students were given questions and clear criteria for their observations in advance of watching.
- Student engagement during lessons was very good. Students were provided with many opportunities to collaborate with their peers, interrogate their learning and were able to express themselves with confidence. Consequently, there was a very strong sense of student ownership of their own learning.
- All lessons observed included opportunities for active learning. Commendably this included time for plenary sessions which facilitated students to share their learning and discuss their experience of the activity.
- The structure of groupwork was very good. In one lesson the assignment of participants to groups was carefully planned to ensure that students had opportunities to extend their friendship groups and hear differing points of view. This practice should be extended to all lessons. Students were facilitated to assign roles for tasks within their group. In some instances, roles could have been assigned earlier in the task so that students were aware of their role from the outset.
- Overall students worked purposefully and contributed very well to class discussions. Students had very good opportunities to derive their own conclusions about topics. Students' contributions to sensitive topics were respectful and were very well facilitated and encouraged by the teacher. Students demonstrated very good ability to confidently share their views while respecting those of others.
- Highly effective practice was evident in all lessons when students' learning was assessed in a variety of ways such as questioning, the completion of worksheets or homework assignments. Valuable written feedback was recorded on student work by the teacher and copybooks were well monitored. However, the quantity and quality of student work varied greatly. The SPHE department should establish and agree its policy and practices regarding the assignment and assessment of students' written work.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- Junior Cycle SPHE is delivered as part of the School's *Men of Character* programme which encompasses SPHE and Civic Social and Political Education. Elements of RSE are delivered at both junior and senior cycle during religious education (RE) lessons. However, key aspects of the RSE programme such as sexuality, gender identity and sexual health are not fully implemented. This requires immediate attention in order to comply with the requirements of section 8.4.2 of the Child Safeguarding Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017. At junior cycle RSE should be delivered as an integrated programme with SPHE and all four strands of the junior cycle specification should be addressed.
- Senior management is supportive of SPHE and there is a focused approach to nurturing the spiritual and personal development of students as well as promoting happiness and wellbeing among the student cohort.
- Students spoke positively of their experiences in SPHE with regard to the active nature of the lessons and opportunities to work collaboratively with their peers. They reported that lessons are interesting and enjoyable and that topics are generally covered in depth. Students reported a lack of focus on RSE and expressed a need to cover a broader range of topics including safe sex and sexuality.
- A small core team is in the place for the delivery of SPHE and RSE. This is very good practice. Current team members expressed interest in teaching SPHE, however subject-specific training has not been accessed. To enhance the quality of planning and implementation of SPHE and RSE, teachers who have not completed introductory training should do so, and a systematic and incremental approach should be adopted to ongoing training of all SPHE and RSE teachers.
- A RSE policy has been developed providing guidance to the school community on provision in this area within the value system of the school. Curricular content is listed for junior and senior cycle. School management should ensure that the content for senior cycle is in alignment with the RSE Interim Curriculum Guidelines and Circular 0027/2008 and junior cycle content is in line with the specification.

3. Planning and preparation

- There is scope for development of planning for the SPHE and RSE as it does not address all required elements of the programmes. It is acknowledged that the *Men of Character* programme is in its infancy and is undergoing ongoing review. To ensure that lessons are aligned to the specification, teachers are advised to review planned content and related activities against the learning outcomes provided in the specification.
- Programmes of work are in place for SPHE. There is a strong focus in junior cycle on topics such as online safety, conflict, self-esteem, critical thinking, mental and physical health and developing positive values. Very good schemes of work for delivery of these topics are in place. To build on this good practice schemes of work should now be developed to integrate RSE into the SPHE programme.
- A list of topics was in place for RSE from first to sixth year, but no programmes of work. The topics do not cover all of the required learning and is integrated with RE. Discussions with senior cycle students indicated that they were not aware of learning RSE in post-primary school to date, and were unable to distinguish between their learning of RE and RSE. It is recommended that RSE be taught as a distinct module in senior cycle so that students are fully aware of what they are learning and the context within which they are learning. An audit of RSE topics with students to ascertain what they know and understand is strongly advised.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal/deputy principal/subject teacher at the conclusion of the evaluation.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school is delighted to see the report recognises that the overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment observed was Very Good, the highest level of the Inspectorate's Quality Continuum. It has also been noted in the report that lessons are characterised by positive relationships and mutual respect, with a strong emphasis on values which contribute to the holistic development of students.

The schools Men of Character programme, an integrated approach to nurturing the personal development of students, has been highlighted positively as promoting happiness and wellbeing among the student cohort.

The school's focus on a small core team to deliver SPHE and RSE is also praised as very good practice.

The school is working on the development needs of its current RSE programme which have been noted in the report, in terms of its content and delivery.

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 is reviewing its anti-bullying policy, meeting the requirement in relation to check 1 of the anti-bullying policy checks ('the need to be reviewed annually'), and is also aligning the policy to the templates provided in the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013).

In consultation with parents, who are the primary educators of their sons, the subject planning and policy of the RSE programme throughout the school is being audited to ensure that it is comprehensive and meets the needs of our students; more detailed schemes of work are being devised to ensure effective delivery.

At Junior Cycle, the school will continue to develop RSE as a module integrated with SPHE, addressing all four strands of the JC specification.

The school is working with its core team of teachers delivering RSE to strengthen a RSE module for and Senior Cycle distinct from the school's RE programme.

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;