An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: SPHE
Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Saint Paul's Junior National School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Clonrosse Drive Ayrfield Dublin 13
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	19471U
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	15-11-2022

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 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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At the time of the evaluation the school did not meet one aspect of anti-bullying check one above. While the school's anti-bullying policy meets the requirements of the procedures, provision was not made for the annual review of the policy. Subsequent to the in-school phase of the evaluation the school provided evidence of meeting the requirements in relation to each of the anti-bullying checks above. The school met all the requirements in relation to child protection checks.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	15-11-2022
Inspection activities undertaken • Discussion with principal and teachers • Review of relevant documents	• Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of pupils' work • Interaction with pupils • Feedback to principal and teachers

School context

Saint Paul's Junior National School is a junior co-educational school in Ayrfield, Dublin 13 that operates under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. At the time of the evaluation 237 pupils were enrolled, distributed across nine mainstream classes and one special class for pupils with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). There were four full-time special education teaching (SET) posts on the staff. There were eight special needs assistant posts allocated to the school.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) was very good.
- The school has established very effective structures to enable teachers to share good practice and articulate high expectations for learning; the work of the principal and the in-school management team in this regard is highly commended.
- The quality of the support for pupils' learning was very good; the emphasis on teaching specific SPHE vocabulary and providing pupils with opportunities to use this vocabulary in context was highly commendable.
- Collective approaches to the use of active methodologies, activating prior knowledge, links and application to real-life experience and collaborative small group learning were highly effective.
- The quality of planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE), and the contribution of the whole-school planning processes to progressing pupils' learning in SPHE were very good.

Recommendations

- The school should review how its monthly progress records record the delivery of *Stay Safe* to fully ensure its implementation as it is designed.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

The overall quality of pupils' learning in SPHE was very good. Pupils displayed very high levels of interest and participation in their learning in SPHE. During lessons many pupils spoke confidently using subject-specific language and terms to express their opinions and thoughts and to convey understanding of topics and concepts. Pupils demonstrated clear familiarity with the strategies taught in *Stay Safe* and very good knowledge and understanding of various strands of the SPHE curriculum. For example, the pupils had a well-developed understanding of personal safety and demonstrated familiarity with a range of strategies for managing feelings and emotions.

The pupils described with enthusiasm their learning gleaned from various guest speakers, such as members of the fire service, and traffic warden. They indicated that the school provided good

opportunities for pupil leadership through the student council and Green Flag committee. Learning was greatly enhanced by the meaningful opportunities provided to the pupils to reflect on their learning at the end of lessons.

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

The quality of the support for pupils' learning was very good. Pupils' experience of a warm and affirming atmosphere at school contributed to their learning in SPHE and their wellbeing. All classroom environments visited had calm, positive and supportive atmospheres. They were stimulating and inclusive. The SPHE displays in classes were print-rich, acting as both a stimulus to learning and a celebration of previous learning. There was a strong celebration of pupil voice evident within the school. It was worthy of commendation that teachers took care to activate pupils' prior knowledge in the concept and to link the new lesson content with the learners' personal experiences. The regular opportunities provided for pupils to talk and discuss safe and unsafe situations in road safety as observed during the evaluation supported all pupils' understanding.

Each lesson observed was structured very well and had a clear learning intention. Teaching was characterised by a high level of clarity in the explanation of new content to the pupils. A valuable emphasis was placed on developing pupils' understanding of the specific vocabulary of learning in SPHE. Teachers were successful in enabling the pupils to implement newly acquired strategies and skills through meaningful pair work and group work. Teachers articulated high expectations for pupils' learning. A wide range of teaching methodologies was used throughout the school during SPHE lessons with particularly good use made of role-play, drama, active learning and visual resources. Pupils found role-play and the active approaches particularly stimulating. In certain settings dedicated thinking time before pair work ensured pupils could understand and connect with tasks independently.

Teachers used a range of assessment approaches to inform teaching and learning. Teachers used questioning, plenary sessions, active formative assessment during lessons and collaborative writing tasks within their assessment of SPHE. Pupil profile books that travel with the pupil from junior infants to second class recorded progression in writing and celebrated the *Myself* strand of the SPHE curriculum. *Stay Safe* assessment information is noted and passed on for each pupil each year and the receipt of this information confirmed by the parents. In monitoring and recording the implementation of Stay Safe and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), monthly progress records indicated a need for greater monitoring of how the delivery of *Stay Safe* is recorded to ensure the integrity of its implementation as it is designed.

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

The quality of planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE), and the contribution of the whole-school planning processes to progressing pupils' learning in SPHE were very good. The school plan outlined the strands and strand units to be addressed within the concept of a two-year cycle and provided guidance for teachers regarding the delivery of *Stay Safe* and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).

Teachers' long term written preparation was done collaboratively and informed short term preparation. During the evaluation it was seen that all class teachers delivered certain topics or strands at the same time to ensure a whole school focus in learning. Written preparation focused very well on providing for the provision of SPHE specific language to the pupils; this was very effective.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The evaluation of SPHE and the report that was highly positive. We welcome the inspector's report which acknowledges the high quality of teaching and learning in our school. We particularly welcome the findings of the pupils' high levels of enthusiasm and confidence during learning and the emphasis placed on the teaching of specific vocabulary.

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 acknowledges the recommendation of the Inspectorate. Provision has been made for the annual review of the Anti-Bullying policy. The whole school staff will review how its monthly progress records of SPHE record the delivery of Stay Safe and will ensure the effectiveness of its implementation. A record of absent pupils during the Stay Safe programme, is being compiled annually to ensure that all pupils access all lessons.

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;