An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Curriculum Evaluation: SPHE
REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Fraoch Mór NS
Seoladh na scoile/School address	The Heath Portlaoise
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	18150S
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	25/03/2026
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	10/06/2026

What is a curriculum evaluation?

Curriculum evaluations currently report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects and curriculum areas of the Primary School Curriculum (1999), and the redeveloped Primary Curriculum (2025). They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject or curriculum area in the school.

How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspectors evaluated learning and teaching in SPHE under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils' learning outcomes
2. Supporting pupils' learning through learning 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.

Included in this curriculum evaluation report is a pupil-friendly page that provides information for the children/young people in your school about the inspection that occurred recently. It outlines for them some of the main findings and recommendations.

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>Bí Cineálta</td></tr>
<tr><td>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) are prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the reception area. Following the school's adoption of the updated procedures 2025, it is also required to display a pupil-friendly version incorporating the name of the DLP beside the CSS.
2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern.</td><td>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of Bí Cineálta, it is reviewed annually (or earlier if required) and includes a pupil friendly version that is displayed where pupils and the school community can see it.
2. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, staff, parents and pupils.
3. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides an update to the board at each ordinary board meeting that meets the requirements of Bí Cineálta.</td></tr>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	25/03/2026
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

Scoil an Fhraoich Mhóir is a co-educational, Catholic primary school in the Heath, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. It is under the patronage of the bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. The school had an administrative principal, eight mainstream teaching posts, five full-time special education teaching posts, one part-time special education teaching post and one part-time English as an additional language (EAL) teaching post. There were 212 pupils enrolled in the school at the time of the evaluation.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Pupils' learning outcomes in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) were good.
- Learner experiences were very good. The rich curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities experienced by pupils contributed to their learning and progression.
- Teachers' practice was commendable. Teachers used an effective balance of explicit teaching together with opportunities for pupils to discuss new learning and to practice new skills during lessons.
- Whole-school planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE), was effective in supporting provision for SPHE.

Recommendations

- Teachers should ensure pupils' learning is supported in a broad and balanced approach across the three strands of the SPHE curriculum to support pupils' knowledge development according to the aims of the SPHE curriculum.
- As opportunities for pupils to reflect on themselves as learners was an area for development, teachers should provide regular opportunities for pupils to record and reflect on their learning in SPHE, including new vocabulary, concepts, and skills.
- Teachers should routinely consider how connections can be made between the strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum when preparing learning experiences. This will support pupils to apply their learning in varied contexts.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

Pupils' learning outcomes in SPHE were good. Pupils presented as confident learners, were respectful and engaged well during class discussions. During the focus group, pupils discussed the importance of their learning in SPHE and understood how their learning supported their personal development and wellbeing.

Pupils' sense of self was well developed in relation to their learning in the *Myself* strand. They ably discussed concepts such as their personal attributes, methods of communicating thoughts and ideas and their independence and individuality. Pupils understood how to take care of their body, the importance of personal hygiene and the links between personal hygiene and growing and changing as they get older. Highly commendable outcomes were observed where pupils demonstrated emotional awareness and understood the influence of emotions on the body and the impact of emotions on making decisions. Pupils also demonstrated a wide range of self-regulation strategies as part of an overall regulation skillset developed throughout the school. Pupils understood the human life cycle. They confidently discussed aspects of personal safety and protection.

Pupils' learning in relation to the *Myself and others* strand was of a high standard. They demonstrated an understanding of a range of relationships with others, such as family and friendship links, as well as the various influences on relationships including peer influences and the viewpoints of others. Pupils competently explained a range of concepts linked to learning in SPHE including stereotyping, bias and discrimination. It would be beneficial to support pupils' ability to contextualise these concepts in their everyday lives to further support their understanding. Pupils were knowledgeable about what bullying behaviour means and the various forms of bullying behaviour that can occur.

Pupils identified some key individual and community roles that promoted health, safety and belonging in their locality as part of their learning in relation to the *Myself and the wider world* strand. Senior classes understood basic principles of media and advertising. Pupils' learning in relation to this strand was underdeveloped overall and this limited their understanding of social responsibility, the interdependent nature of the world and active citizenship as a result. Teachers should ensure pupils' learning is supported in a broad and balanced approach across the three strands of the curriculum to support pupils' knowledge development according to the aims of SPHE.

2. Supporting pupils' learning outcomes through learning experiences and teachers' practice

Learner experiences were very good. Pupils routinely engaged in circle time, debates and cooperative opportunities that provided high quality discursive learning experiences that supported their learning in SPHE. They were afforded opportunities to experience and practice a range of decision-making strategies and conflict resolution strategies through explicit teaching and modelling by their teachers as well as through drama-based activities. Teachers used a rich range of literature resources, including poems and stories that supported pupils to explore different perspectives and personal experiences through these fictional contexts. Pupils' opportunities to document their learning and progression in SPHE warranted further development. Teachers should provide regular opportunities for pupils to record and reflect on their learning in SPHE. This should include a focus on new vocabulary, concepts, and skills in SPHE. This would be a useful reference point for pupils as they progress as learners.

Leaders and teachers carefully developed the physical environment of the school to create a sense of belonging. The establishment of a students' council supported the development of an understanding of democratic processes including elections and representation while also providing meaningful opportunities for pupils to actively participate in school life. Pupils

accessed a rich range of co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities throughout the school day that supported friendships and social opportunities. Teachers are highly commended for their efforts in providing such a rich and engaging range of experiences. School assemblies and displays around the school were used to promote pupil achievement as well as to celebrate the cultural backgrounds that made up the school community. Guest speakers were routinely organised to support learning in relation to safety in particular, including fire safety and internet safety.

Teachers' practice was commendable. Teachers employed a range of pedagogical approaches during lessons including explicit teaching, the use of social narratives and artistic responses to learning such as cartooning, to explore new concepts and skills. Teachers effectively used questioning during lessons to monitor pupil understanding. It would be beneficial to further develop questioning techniques that support pupils to critically analyse and justify their answers during discussions. Individual teachers organised a range of initiatives that are worthwhile implementing at a whole-school level to support pupils learning and wellbeing. These included initiatives that encouraged pupils to come into school each morning and teacher-pupil check-ins.

Teachers used a range of resources and programmes, including evidence-based programmes such as Friends for Life, to organise suitable learning experiences for pupils. Most shared intended learning of lessons with pupils that supported them to understand key learning. They organised well-paced and engaging lessons. There was scope to organise experiences that supported more explicit links between strands, strand units and knowledge, skills and concepts, for example, bias in media and peer pressure and decision-making. Teachers should routinely consider how connections can be made between the strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum when preparing learning experiences. This will support pupils to apply their learning in varied contexts.

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

Whole-school planning, including SSE, was effective in supporting provision for SPHE. The plan provided useful guidance based on a two-year learning period and included agreed approaches to learning and teaching, resources and programmes of learning. It is recommended that school leaders further develop an oversight role to support curriculum enactment. This should include the identification of curriculum areas to be developed and the professional learning needs of teachers to support curriculum enactment.

Self-evaluation processes were well established in the school with evidence of impact on a range of areas. There was wide engagement with pupils, teachers and parents using the key areas of the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.* This resulted in the development of a comprehensive development plan based on identified whole-school needs. Areas for development included home/school relationships, provision for Physical Education and a review of programmes supporting SPHE learning. Leaders are well placed to use these processes to further develop curriculum learning for SPHE.

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For the pupils of Fraoch Mór NS about their learning in SPHE
Date of inspection: 25/03/2026

Introduction

Your school had an inspection of SPHE recently. This page for pupils describes what the inspectors found and gives ideas about what the school should do to make learning better.

What did the inspectors do during the visit?

The inspectors visited classrooms and talked to teachers and pupils about the work they were doing. The inspectors also met with a focus group of pupils to talk to them about their learning.

What did the inspectors find?

Here are some of the main things:

- Pupils' learning in SPHE was good.
- Pupils understood the importance of SPHE as a subject. They learned lots of new ideas and skills as part of their lessons.
- Pupils had a variety of learning experiences that provided them with valuable opportunities to talk about and practice their new learning, for example, how to make a decision.

What the inspectors said the school should do to make learning better

- Pupils should have regular opportunities to record and think about their new learning in lots of different ways.
- Pupils should be supported to connect their learning across the different topics they learn about as part of SPHE.

Thank you for taking the time to read this page.
A special thank you to pupils who took part in the focus group.

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	Examples of descriptive terms
Excellent	**Provision that is excellent** is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
Very good	**Provision that is very good** is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
Good	**Provision that is good** is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	**Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard** is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	**Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard** is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management are pleased that the inspectorate recognises the very good ongoing work taking place in the school SPHE. The findings on the range of learner experiences being provided, teachers' practice and whole-school planning including SSE, the Board believes, are a fair reflection of the work which takes place in the school on a daily basis.

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

The staff and Board of Management have discussed the Inspectorate's recommendations. The three recommendations regarding balance across the three strands, opportunities for pupils to reflect on themselves as learners and teachers considering how to create connections between stands will form the basis for the school's next School Improvement Plan in SPHE. Work on this plan will commence in the 2026-27 school year.