



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: SPHE Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	SN Ard Raithin
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Ardrahan Co. Galway
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	170071
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	13-10-2022
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	21/11/2022

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 evaluated learning and teaching in Social, Personal and Health Education 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

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> 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 <i>Procedures</i>) 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 the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	13-10-2022
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal and teachers

School context

Ardrahan National School is a co-educational primary school located in the townland of Labane in County Galway. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora. The school has six mainstream class teachers and two special education teachers (SETs). There were 147 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- A positive, respectful school climate, focused on wellbeing is embedded in the school's culture and underpins all aspects of school life.
- The overall quality of pupils' learning in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) was very good and pupils demonstrated very high levels of interest, motivation and engagement in learning.
- The quality of learning experiences provided for pupils in SPHE was of a very high quality; pupils were provided with opportunities to engage in a very broad range of stimulating learning activities.
- The overall quality of teaching observed during the evaluation was very good where emphasis was regularly placed on pupils' specific learning skills.
- The school has engaged very successfully, and in a highly collaborative manner, in the careful formulation of school planning for SPHE.

Recommendations

- All teachers should identify, record and display the key vocabulary relevant to the lesson for each topic in SPHE.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

The overall quality of pupils' learning in SPHE was very good. Pupils enjoyed their lessons and were motivated to learn. They demonstrated very high levels of interest and participation in learning. Pupils' overall attainment was at a very high standard, in accordance with the learning outcomes of the SPHE curriculum. One of the most important learner outcomes that has been achieved in this school was the very good speaking and listening skills demonstrated by the pupils in all classrooms. The pupils displayed increasing levels of confidence and articulation in relation to their learning in SPHE as they progressed through the school.

Pupils demonstrated a highly commendable awareness of wellbeing, healthy living, friendship and *Growing and changing*. They displayed very high levels of understanding of the strand units *Media education*, *Safety and protection* and *Making decisions*. Pupils could identify and discuss types of bullying confidently and were aware of strategies to respond to bullying behaviour. During the pupil focus-group, pupils communicated very favourable attitudes to learning in

SPHE. They displayed very good knowledge of how their skills in SPHE could be applied to settings and activities which they had experienced outside of their school context.

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

The overall quality of the learning experiences observed during the inspection was very good. A very positive climate, focused on individual pupil wellbeing was evident. The interactions between teachers and pupils and among pupils themselves were marked by very high levels of empathy and respect. The rich classroom and corridor displays promoted a very strong understanding and appreciation of SPHE.

Pupils participated fully in SPHE lessons and completed independent and collaborative activities, in a purposeful and meaningful manner. These included circle time, scenarios, games, music, story and pupils' use of digital technologies. The pupils in the focus group described their learning experiences in SPHE, which included, interacting with their peers, talk and discussion with their teacher, solving problems through scenario type activities and engaging in role-play. In addition, pupils spoke about their enjoyment of sporting activities and online presentations by outside speakers. A wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities supported pupils' learning in SPHE including Wellbeing Wednesday, drumming sessions, mindfulness, yoga and the Green Team. It is highly praiseworthy that the pupils were provided with opportunities to be members of various committees.

The overall quality of teaching in SPHE was of a very high standard. Teachers were well prepared for lessons and learning intentions were shared by teachers. Overall, lessons were very well structured, paced appropriately and sufficiently resourced. Teachers placed very good emphasis on pupils' specific learning skills and included a very good range of active learning strategies such as talk and discussion, problem solving, use of visual supports and digital technology. One element of exemplary practice that was implemented particularly well by some teachers was the explicit identification and displaying of key vocabulary relevant to the lesson. Teachers also showed great skill in enabling pupils to use the target vocabulary independently and fluently during the lessons observed. This highly effective practice should be extended to all settings.

The overall quality of assessment was good. A variety of strategies was used to record and monitor pupils' progress in SPHE. These included copybooks, teacher questioning, portfolios, pupil surveys, self-assessment, peer-assessment and digital tools. Teachers should build on these very effective practices to agree a whole-school approach to the assessment of SPHE to ensure that meaningful records of pupils' learning are maintained.

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

The quality of school planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE), in progressing pupils' learning in SPHE is very good. The school plan for SPHE was devised collaboratively by all staff. It gives very good guidance to teachers on many aspects of practice, including the content to be covered within two-year cycles. School policies and resources, which support the implementation of SPHE, are also referenced effectively. Aspects of different initiatives such as Stay Safe, Friends for Life, Zippy's Friends and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programmes are included. Teachers' recorded preparation is linked effectively to the whole-school plan in terms of curriculum objectives and content. In addition, the school has a Critical Incident plan and team in place.

The school has used the SSE process to address priority areas in SPHE. A high-quality, School Improvement Plan (SIP) in Wellbeing has been devised. Wellbeing targets and actions were identified collectively and implemented. The shared responsibility of the SIP is particularly noteworthy. It is highly commendable that teachers have previously accessed and continue to access relevant continuing professional development to support their classroom practice in this regard.

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 of Ardrahan National School welcomes the inspection report and wishes to acknowledge the positive findings of this report and the recommendations therein. The board is particularly pleased that the report affirms the very high quality of learner experiences throughout the school in SPHE and the high quality of whole-school planning which provides clear guidance to support progression of learner outcomes.

We are pleased that teachers' high quality preparation for lessons and commitment to continuous professional development (CPD) in SPHE was recognised and affirmed. We also welcome the findings that our engagement with the SSE process and our School Improvement Plan, with a focus on Wellbeing, was of a high quality. The board is very pleased that pupils were observed to be enjoying their learning and were motivated to learn.

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

We are committed to implementing the recommendations of the report. The exemplary practice of explicitly identifying, recording and displaying key vocabulary relevant to all SPHE lessons will be developed further throughout the school, enabling pupils to continue to use the target vocabulary independently and fluently.

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