



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: SPHE Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Stackallen N S
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Stackallen Navan County Meath
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	01309L
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	26-10-2022

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 [Subject] 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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 were prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.2. The Child Safeguarding Statement had been ratified by the board and included an annual review and a risk assessment.3. All teachers visited reported that they had read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they were aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school had 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 was reviewed annually.2. The board of management minutes recorded that the principal provided 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 was published on its website and/or was 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	26-10-2022
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

Stackallen National School is a rural, co-educational primary school located in the hinterland of Navan and operates under the patronage of the Archbishop of Meath. The school has seven mainstream teachers and three special education teachers, one of whom was shared with another local school. At the time of the inspection, there were 179 pupils enrolled in the school.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of learning in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) was very good with pupils demonstrating high levels of engagement and very good capacity to share their opinions in an articulate and confident manner.
- A positive, supportive atmosphere, focused on pupil wellbeing was evident across the school.
- Learner experiences were of a very high quality where pupils purposefully engaged in meaningful learning activities and were provided with opportunities for activity-based learning.
- The overall quality of teaching was very good with teachers using a wide range of methodologies and effectively connecting pupils' learning across the curriculum.
- School planning was of a very good quality; the SPHE plan has been reviewed recently and targets from the school improvement plan relating to wellbeing, were well embedded in teachers' practice and pupils' learning experiences.

Recommendation

- To maximise the impact of the very good range of questions on pupils' learning, teachers should provide them with additional opportunities to collaborate with their peers so that they can discuss their thoughts and justify their opinions before individually contributing to whole-class discussion.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

The overall quality of learning in SPHE was very good. Pupils demonstrated very high levels of interest and were highly motivated to participate in lessons. They attentively listened to the opinions of their peers and respectfully engaged in whole-class discussions and activities. They were articulate in sharing their opinions and used subject-specific language appropriately and confidently.

Pupils demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of the various strands of the SPHE curriculum. They displayed an age-appropriate awareness of their emotions and could ably describe the strategies used in managing their emotions. Pupils confidently spoke about themselves as unique individuals and their roles and responsibilities as valued members of the school community. Most pupils competently discussed their decision-making processes and demonstrated an awareness of the influences which guide their decisions. Pupils demonstrated very good knowledge in relation to recognising and addressing bullying behaviour. Pupils were provided with meaningful opportunities to reflect on their learning at the end of lessons. This could be further enhanced by enabling them to record their new learning in a learning log, a practice which would facilitate on-going reflection of learning as the year progresses.

Pupils had benefitted from engagement in a number of cross-curricular initiatives that enhanced their learning. School involvement in a collaborative cluster programme focused on creativity had contributed to their development in expressing their creativity whilst exploring a theme relevant to the SPHE curriculum.

During the focus-group meeting, pupils reported that they enjoyed their learning in SPHE as it provided them with relevant skills necessary for daily living and opportunities to engage in regular group-work. They described with enthusiasm their learning gleaned from various guest speakers. Pupils indicated that the school provided good opportunities for pupil leadership through involvement in the various committees for Green Schools, the Amber Flag and the Active Flag.

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

The quality of learning experiences for pupils in SPHE was very good. A positive, supportive atmosphere, focused on individual wellbeing underpinned all aspects of school life. SPHE was celebrated in classrooms and in the wider school environment through attractive displays of pupils' learning. Pupils engaged purposefully in meaningful learning activities and particularly enjoyed opportunities to be active in their learning. Where the learning was particularly effective, pupils were provided with opportunities to implement newly acquired strategies and skills through pair work and role play, a practice which should be extended to all lessons.

The overall quality of teaching was very good. Lessons were well structured. The intended learning outcomes were shared with the pupils at the beginning of lessons and reflected upon during the plenary session of the lessons. Teachers assessed pupils' prior knowledge and explicitly linked the learning to the everyday context, thereby, informing pupils of its relevance. They adopted an integrated approach to teaching SPHE, effectively connecting pupils' learning across the curriculum. Teachers modelled the use of SPHE specific language in a meaningful manner and made use of a range of methodologies to enhance pupils' learner experiences including story, mind mapping, role play and collaborative tasks. They made use of a wide range of questions to elicit and extend pupils' understanding. There was an emphasis on whole-class questioning at times, with opportunities only for individual pupils to answer the questions posed. Teachers should provide more frequent opportunities for pupils to collaborate with their peers in discussing and justifying their responses before contributing to class discussions.

The special education team provided a number of targeted interventions and evidence-based programmes in a focused and strategic manner to equip pupils with the necessary strategies for effective regulation and prosocial engagement.

A range of effective strategies was implemented to monitor and assess pupils' learning in SPHE. Teachers facilitated pupils in assessing their learning as the lessons progressed and provided effective verbal feedback in order to scaffold pupils' understanding. Pupils maintained digital assessment portfolios enabling them to share their progress with their parents.

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

The quality of planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE) was highly effective. The SPHE policy was reviewed recently and reflects teachers' adaptability in meeting the needs of the pupils following the Covid-19 pandemic. It very clearly informed and reflected teachers' practice in relation to the delivery of the Stay Safe programme, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and all three strands of the curriculum over a two-year period. The plan was contextualised to the school and provided details of actions to support the creation of an inclusive school community. A comprehensive critical incident policy had been devised and was displayed in the school foyer.

The topic of wellbeing provided the focus for the current school self-evaluation (SSE) cycle. The voice of teachers and pupils, as captured in relevant questionnaires and focus groups, informed the identification of targets and corresponding actions which were very well embedded in both teachers' practice and pupils' learning experiences. A culture of collaboration and reflection had been fostered by the principal and teachers. The systematic introduction of various programmes on a pilot-based approach, informed by on-going monitoring and evaluation, was highly commendable. Teachers' on-going engagement with targeted professional development to support the implementation of evidence-based programmes, relevant to SPHE, was praiseworthy.

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;