



**An Roinn Oideachais**  
Department of Education

# Curriculum Evaluation: SPHE Report

## REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Scoil na mBráthar
Seoladh na scoile/School address	John Dillon Street Dublin 8
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	18477E
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	28-09-2022
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	21/11/2022

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## 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 inspectors 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 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"><li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.</li><li>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li><li>3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>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.</li><li>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.</li><li>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.</li></ol>

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

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# Curriculum evaluation

<b>Date of inspection</b>	28-09-2022
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Pupil focus-group interview</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

## School context

Scoil na mBráthar is an urban school located in Dublin city and is under the patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. Traditionally a boys' senior school, the school welcomed its first mixed intake of junior infants in 2021. At the time of the evaluation, there were 170 pupils enrolled. The staff included eight mainstream class teachers and four special education teachers (SET). The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education for educational inclusion.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- Pupils demonstrated very good learning outcomes in SPHE.
- The quality of the learning experiences provided for pupils was of a very high standard; a warm and affirming atmosphere was observed, with pupils experiencing a strong sense of belonging and of being valued as individuals.
- The teaching of SPHE observed during the evaluation was very good; teachers employed a wide range of active methodologies.
- Teachers used a good range of assessment strategies to monitor pupils' progress in SPHE.
- The quality of whole-school planning for SPHE was very good and offered very good guidance to teachers' classroom practice.

### Recommendations

- Teachers should agree and implement a suitable range of additional assessment strategies designed to record the progression of pupils' learning in SPHE.

## Detailed findings and recommendations

### 1. The quality of pupils' learning

The overall attainment of the pupils in SPHE was of a very high standard in accordance with the objectives and skills of the Primary School Curriculum. While SPHE is taught as a curriculum subject, it also permeates all aspects of school life, including the school ethos, the school plans and policies, and the learning experiences provided for the pupils. Pupils presented as confident and motivated learners with well-developed social, communication and co-operative skills. They demonstrated high levels of motivation, interest and participation in their learning. A very strong sense of community has been cultivated in the school. In their participation in lessons, pupils demonstrated high levels of self-confidence and positive self-esteem. Interactions between pupils and teachers and among the pupils were very positive and conducive to wellbeing. During the group discussions, many pupils spoke eloquently and enthusiastically about the wide range of activities they experience during SPHE lessons. They demonstrated a very deep and practical understanding of the concepts of inclusion, empathy and respect. Pupils' ability to

understand and accept themselves as individuals, to listen to and respect different points of view, and to make informed decisions was being developed systematically in the school. During the lessons observed, pupils were encouraged to understand and recognise how they are unique, valued and loved.

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

The quality of the learning experiences provided was very good. A positive, supportive atmosphere, focused on individual pupil wellbeing and whole-school pastoral care was evident. Pupils described a strong sense of belonging to the school community. Commendably, the pupils had the opportunity to partake in a student council and many other committees, including Green Schools, Changemakers and Wellbeing Warriors. Pupil voice was given due weight, and they offered examples of where their views and opinions had impacted decision-making in the school. The collaborative agreement of classroom rules further promoted pupil voice and fostered an understanding of the democratic process.

The teaching observed in SPHE was of very high quality. Lessons were based soundly on curriculum learning outcomes and were appropriate to the emotional and intellectual maturity of the pupils. Teachers' practice in all settings was commendably inclusive of all pupils. Lessons were very well structured, paced appropriately and sufficiently resourced. Support for learning in SPHE was evident in the rich classroom and corridor displays. Teachers employed a very effective range of methodologies appropriate to the teaching of SPHE; methodologies included circle time, drama, role-play, song, pair work, group work, and the use of scenarios and stories.

Teachers worked collaboratively to ensure that emotional literacy was promoted and developed in a systematic, incremental manner. The school demonstrated sustained and innovative practice around pupil wellbeing. Collectively, teachers have engaged with other national and international learning communities to share practices and gain deeper perspectives on SPHE and pupil wellbeing.

Overall, a good range of assessment strategies was used in building a profile of each pupil's learning in SPHE. Copybooks, assessment folders, and classroom displays recorded and celebrated pupils' learning outcomes. Small whiteboards were used by the pupils during lessons and these provided teachers with opportunities for effective assessment for learning. Objectives-based checklists, linked to long-term planning, had recently been employed to monitor pupils' SPHE learning. Consideration should now be given to the design and implementation of additional agreed whole-school approaches that could be used flexibly to record the progression of pupils learning in SPHE.

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

School planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE) was very effective in supporting the progression of pupils' learning in SPHE. The whole-school plan outlined an SPHE programme that included comprehensive coverage of the curriculum over a two-year period. The delivery of relationships and sexuality education (RSE), Stay Safe, anti-bullying and substance abuse programmes was very well supported in the overall plan. School leaders promoted a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment. Teachers worked together to devise learning opportunities for pupils across and beyond the curriculum. All teachers prepared long, and short-term programmes of work and it was evident from these that a broad and balanced SPHE curriculum was being implemented across the school.

Exemplars of practice in SPHE, deemed by the teachers to be particularly effective in each class setting, might now be included in the whole-school plan along with any further agreed assessment strategies designed to monitor pupils' learning in SPHE.

# **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 Francis Street CBS welcomes the publication of this Curriculum Evaluation Report on the teaching of SPHE at our school. The Board is very satisfied with the acknowledgement of our high quality of teaching in the area of SPHE: the quality of the learning experiences provided for pupils was of a very high standard, a warm and affirming atmosphere was observed, with pupils experiencing a strong sense of belonging and of being valued as individuals, the quality of whole school planning for SPHE was very good. The Board appreciates the Report's appraisal of how our teachers work collaboratively to ensure that emotional literacy is promoted and developed in a systematic, incremental manner, leading to interactions between pupils and teachers, and between pupils themselves, that is very positive and conducive to well-being which we agree reflects in the fact that each child feels that he/she is unique, understood, listened to, valued and loved. Acknowledgement of the pupil's demonstration of a very deep and practical understanding of the concepts of inclusion, empathy and respect is particularly noted, especially as it is an element of school life at Francis Street CBS that we take great pride in.

## **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 are very happy that the inspectors have stated in the recent Curriculum Evaluation Report that the overall quality of pupils' learning in SPHE in our school is considered very good and that teachers used a good range of assessment strategies to monitor pupil's progress in SPHE. We also note that the recommendation to implement a suitable range of additional assessment strategies designed to record the progression of pupil's learning in SPHE. As a whole staff, we are happy to adopt this advice and our in school management team have incorporated some objectives around this in the recently devised DEIS SSE Plan 2022-2025 for our school. Each teacher intends to initiate this process by creating a self-assessment folder for each child from Junior Infants to 6th class. We have also adapted our SPHE policy to include an appendix highlighting our plan for the progression of emotional literacy from Junior Infants to 6th Class designed and implemented as a whole school approach following our Curriculum Inspection. Exemplars of practice in SPHE, deemed by individual teachers to be particularly effective in each class setting will now be included in the whole school plan also.

## 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;