An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Curriculum Evaluation: SPHE
REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	SN Chluainin
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Cloneen Fethard Co. Tipperary
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	17694H
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	19/06/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	29/09/2025

What is a curriculum evaluation?

Curriculum evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum (1999),* the *Primary Language Curriculum (2019)* and the *Primary Mathematics Curriculum.* 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 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 student-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>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) or Bí Cineálta (2024) and this policy is reviewed annually.
2. The school's current 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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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	16/06/2025 and 19/06/2025
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

Cloneen National School is a co-educational primary school located near Fethard, County Tipperary. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel and Emly. At the time of the evaluation, the school had an enrolment of sixty-seven pupils. The staffing allocation comprised of four mainstream teachers and one special education teacher, who was also the principal.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning outcomes in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) was of an exceptionally high standard; pupils showed a strong understanding of the characteristics of positive relationships and described very effective strategies for managing emotions and resolving conflict.
- The quality of pupils' learning experiences was excellent; pupils engaged in active learning through a variety of methods including mind-mapping, brainstorming, walking debates, use of story and pictures, video clips, discussion, collaborative games, group challenges and reflection.
- The quality of teaching was exemplary; teachers encouraged discussion and debate, welcoming and valuing individual pupils' opinions.
- The quality of assessment was very good; teachers designed an annual review which recorded pupils' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum.
- The effectiveness of school planning, including School Self-Evaluation (SSE), in progressing pupils' learning was of an exceptionally high standard; the school's SPHE plan was regularly reviewed through a collaborative process, with feedback from parents, pupils and teachers informing agreed approaches and strategies.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that all teachers should support pupils to write constructive reflections on their learning, this would help pupils identify key messages and consider how these can be applied in their daily lives.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

The overall quality of pupils' learning outcomes in SPHE was of an exceptionally high standard. In all lessons observed pupils clearly enjoyed learning. They were motivated and engaged, applying their knowledge and skills across a variety of different activities.

Junior classes ably identified helpers in their school and local community, and very competently described the function of each role. They also explored the importance of these roles and discussed the consequences if individuals did not fulfil their responsibilities.

Pupils in middle classes spoke readily about farm safety, using appropriate language to describe hazards and safety rules. They answered questions confidently drawing on their personal knowledge and experiences of farm life to support their responses. In other middle classes, pupils explored the concept of true and false information. They accurately named different media sources and through collaborative discussion, developed strategies to verify content and statements.

In senior classes, pupils willingly shared their emotions about transitioning to post-primary school. They used sophisticated vocabulary to describe their feelings and identified scenarios they felt excited or unsure about. Using prior learning from other strands of the *SPHE Curriculum,* pupils shared strategies, knowledge and skills that could support them during the transition.

Across all settings, pupils demonstrated a clear understanding of the key messages of the Stay Safe programme. They accurately defined bullying behaviour and very confidently recalled the steps to deal with bullying in different contexts, including online. Pupils also used appropriate language to recall key facts from the strand unit of *Growing and changing*. Incremental progression in knowledge and understanding was evident in the increasingly complex language used by pupils from junior to senior classes. Overall, pupils across all settings, showed a strong understanding of the characteristics of positive relationships and described very effective strategies for managing emotions and resolving conflict.

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

The quality of pupils' learning experiences was excellent. In all classrooms, interactions were very respectful, with pupils willingly sharing their opinions and ideas. They were supported to work productively in groups, collaboratively creating samples to demonstrate their learning.

Pupils engaged in active learning through a variety of methods including mind-mapping, brainstorming, walking debates, use of story and pictures, video clips, discussions, collaborative games, group challenges and reflection. Classroom and school-wide displays promoted an appreciation of SPHE and reinforced the language specific to various strand units. Of significant note were the cross-curricular links between these displays and other subject areas such as Science and English.

A variety of cross curricular, high quality learning experiences supported pupils' sense of belonging, achievement and wellbeing. These experiences, including, Friday assemblies, the Daily Mile, Midday Mindfulness and buddy reading, supported a whole-school approach to developing a growth mindset in pupils.

Pupil participation was proactively fostered in all settings through classroom charters and committees such as Green Schools, Active Schools, student council and the Gaelbhratach. These groups actively sought pupils' opinions on initiatives, resulting in the introduction of chess club, Irish quizzes, installation of basketball hoops and Feel-Good Friday events. Significantly, pupil feedback also influenced whole-school approaches to teaching and assessing spelling. In collaboration with teachers, pupils took responsibility for organising diversity celebrations. One such example was the school-wide engagement in Dyslexia Awareness Month, where pupils researched and designed information displays. Pupil participation also played a key role in enhancing the school grounds, through involvement in designing and creating murals, colourful displays of pupils' art work, willow sculptures, buddy benches and the maintenance of a community garden.

All pupils in the focus group expressed a very positive attitude towards SPHE. They spoke enthusiastically about opportunities to learn and use their imagination through drama, games, group work and projects. During the discussion, pupils described a wide variety of activities available to them outside of the classroom environment. They showed particular interest in regular visits from community members, such as the fire service and the Gardaí. Pupils spoke very competently about the concept of a growth mindset and provided examples of how this approach had changed their perspective in trying new things or tackling challenging activities. They also identified that learning in SPHE had increased their knowledge of how to deal with bullying and increased their confidence when speaking up for themselves. Pupils described how behavioural regulation initiatives gave them a structure to manage their emotions when upset, respect the feelings and opinions of others and resolve conflict by talking it out.

The quality of teaching was exemplary. All teachers prepared learning environments that promoted an appreciation of SPHE. In all settings, expectations for pupil engagement were identified. Active learning was consistently evident through the use of a variety of methodologies and concrete materials. Of an exceptionally high standard was the emphasis teachers placed on language development throughout each SPHE lesson. Teachers encouraged discussion and debate, welcoming and valuing individual pupil opinions. Their outstanding questioning techniques effectively scaffolded and challenged pupils as class discussions evolved. Teachers regularly checked pupils' understanding during lessons, revisiting key messages where necessary. To further enhance this highly effective questioning, teachers should involve pupils in designing their own questions as part of the focus on language development in SPHE.

Individual teacher preparation reflected agreed whole-school approaches, ensuring alignment with the school's SPHE plan. This collaborative approach supported the incremental development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding as they progressed through the curriculum. A significant strength in teachers' preparation was their reflection on pupils' progress which identified the learning outcomes that pupils had achieved, and areas requiring further teaching or development. These reflections informed the focus of subsequent lessons.

The quality of assessment was very good. All teachers used monthly reports to reflect on pupils' progress. As part of a whole-school approach, teachers designed an annual review which recorded pupils' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. This practice was highly commendable. In the majority of settings, teachers used photographic evidence to record pupils' learning. All teachers supported pupils to maintain samples of SPHE learning in folders. The majority of teachers shared learning intentions and used these as a basis for pupils to reflect orally on their understanding. To further enhance this practice, it is recommended that all teachers should support pupils to write constructive reflections on their learning. This would help pupils identify key messages and consider how these can be applied in their daily lives.

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

The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning was of an exceptionally high standard. The school's SPHE plan was regularly reviewed through a collaborative process, with feedback from parents, pupils and teachers informing agreed approaches and strategies. The plan clearly identified a two-year cycle for SPHE, including appropriate time frames for the implementation of the RSE and Stay Safe programmes. A significant strength of the plan was the inclusion of a table outlining the language to be taught at each class level for the strand unit of *Growing and changing*. School leadership, in collaboration with staff and Parents' Association, developed and regularly reviewed the school's Critical Incident Plan.

Teachers actively engaged with the SSE process to develop an improvement plan that supported and fostered pupils' sense of belonging and wellbeing, thereby supporting the aims of the *SPHE Curriculum*. Teachers regularly engaged with, and shared, professional learning to support implementation of the improvement plan. Agreed actions were evident in the school environment and in all classroom settings. Teachers systematically monitored the plan at staff

meetings, tracking progress on targets and actions. An overall review was conducted annually. Parents and pupils' views were incorporated into these reviews and informed the subsequent cycle of improvement planning.

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For the pupils of SN Chluainin about their learning in SPHE
Date of inspection: 16/06/2025 and 19/06/2025

Introduction

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

What did the inspector do during the visit?

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

What did the inspector find?

Here are some of the main things:

- Pupils' learning was of a very high standard. Pupils were able to describe what a good friendship looked like and ways to sort out disagreements.
- Pupils' experiences were excellent. They learned about SPHE in many different ways.
- Teaching in SPHE was outstanding. Teachers helped pupils to talk and share ideas to understand things better.

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

- Teachers should help pupils to write about the new things they have learned in SPHE and how they could use this knowledge outside of school.

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

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The evaluation report provides an accurate and affirming reflection of the high standards evident in teaching, learning, planning and assessment throughout Cloneen National School. We are delighted that the hard work, dedication and collaborative efforts of our staff, pupils and wider community have been recognised so positively.

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 will continue to develop the practice of children writing constructive reflections on their learning. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupil reflection throughout the school day. Children are encouraged to reflect on what they learned, on what they found challenging and how they overcame difficulties. Learning Journals and Self-Assessment and Learning Folders continue to form part of the reflective learning practices in our school. Children are encouraged to record their thoughts using a variety of forms, for example, drawings, mind maps or short written entries. This supports metacognition and allows teachers to track pupils' understanding and emotional responses to learning over time, thus helping to inform best practices in our classrooms and in our school.

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