

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Home Economics

REPORT

School name	St Mary's College
School address	St Mary's Road Arklow Co. Wicklow
Roll number	61780A

Date of Inspection: 25-09-2019



**An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna**
Department of
Education and Skills

SUBJECT INSPECTION

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. 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 Home Economics under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

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.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

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.

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

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	24-09-2019 and 25-09-2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and relevant staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to deputy principal and relevant staff

School context

St Mary's Secondary School is a voluntary secondary school with 555 students. The school provides the Junior Cycle, the Leaving Certificate (established), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and an optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good.
- Teachers adopted a student-centred approach to learning and students had opportunities to be active in their learning.
- The overall quality of whole school support and subject provision is very good.
- The design brief process is embedded in food studies practical lessons; teachers' modelling of practical skills through the use of spot demonstrations was limited.
- Teachers' collaborative practice is highly effective; learning outcomes for the development of practical and procedural skills are not included in programmes of work.
- A highly reflective and dynamic subject department has used available data to inform practice and support continuous improvements in students' learning.

Recommendations

- To support the development and refinement of students' practical skills, spot demonstrations should be planned for and utilised by teachers in practical lessons.
- The home economics department should review programme plans to include learning outcomes for the development of practical and procedural skills.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality to teaching and learning was very good.
- Teachers demonstrated very high levels of enthusiasm in the teaching of Home Economics.
- Students were highly engaged in their learning. In all lessons, teachers created opportunities for students to view the shared learning intentions as valuable and relevant in daily living.
- Teachers made deliberate efforts to support students' wellbeing. This was achieved through affirming students' efforts, making appropriate links between lesson content and wellbeing, and adapting learning environments to support the wellbeing of individual students.
- Students were active in their learning and had opportunities to learn collaboratively. Very good practice was observed when a well-organised group activity facilitated students to peer teach using the 'jigsaw' strategy. Furthermore, the teacher assessed students' knowledge of the content, which was peer taught, to ensure learning had taken place. This is very good practice.
- Teachers provided students with opportunities to develop creative thinking skills. Teachers achieved this by providing students with opportunities to seek a variety of solutions to practical food studies tasks, encouraging students to incorporate a pre-used fabric when designing a fashion garment, emphasising aesthetics in the serving of prepared dishes and in encouraging students to be creative when generating their own notes to record learning.
- A range of modes of formative assessment strategies were very well utilised including: think-pair-share; Know, Want, Learn, peer assessment and exit note strategies. In all lessons, clear learning intentions were shared. Very good practice was observed when learning intentions were referenced during lessons and assessed throughout and at the end of lessons. These practices should be extended to all lessons.
- Teacher questioning was very effective. Questions were well distributed and provided students with opportunities to make co-curricular links. Teachers' questions assessed higher and lower order thinking skills and questions were appropriately directed to students. In some lessons, the activities assigned to students were differentiated. This very good practice should be extended.
- Highly effective practice was observed on a recent in-class examination. Students and the teacher reflected on the assessment and identified strengths and areas for improvement. Students used this feedback to guide them when undertaking test corrections. Commendably, the teacher reviewed the test corrections to ensure that progress had been made in the areas identified for improvement.
- Teachers used information and communications technology (ICT) effectively as a teaching tool by designing presentations which supported and structured students' learning. Students were assigned questions in advance of viewing and listening to media clips. This focused students' attention and provided a structure to the discussion which followed.
- In the practical lessons observed, a wide range of dishes were prepared which had been chosen by students as a solution to a task which had been previously assigned. On some occasions, students were not undertaking practical tasks correctly. Using the design brief process is commendable. However, it would be advisable for the class to agree a dish which would fulfil the assigned brief and prepare, cook and serve this dish in the practical lesson. This would ensure that teachers have the time to model practical skills through the use of

spot demonstrations, monitor student's development of skills and provide feedback to students so that they can refine their skills further.

- A noticeable strength of practical food studies lessons was that students had adequate time and opportunity to serve dishes, engage in the evaluation of dishes prepared and in individual and peer assessment. Best practice was observed when students used the shared success criteria to evaluate their work. This practice should be extended.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of whole school support was very good.
- Timetable provision is appropriate and lessons are very well distributed throughout the week.
- The home economics facilities consist of two kitchens and one textiles room which are very well resourced and maintained. Positively, student project work is showcased in classrooms which greatly enhances these learning environments.
- Commendably, senior management provide students with very good access to Home Economics. Considering the layout of the kitchens, the number of students assigned to class groups should be kept under careful review by senior management to ensure optimum learning environments are provided for students.
- Very good supports are in place to enable students and parents make informed subject choice decisions. All first-year students participate in a subject sampling module. In TY, all students study Home Economics as a compulsory module. Option bands are generated based on students' preferences at senior cycle.
- It is good practice that all teachers in the subject department are timetabled to teach Home Economics at junior and senior cycle. This enables teachers to develop collective expertise and aids collaborative planning.
- Senior management support teachers to avail of professional development opportunities.
- In consultation with the home economics department, senior management should develop a risk assessment for the home economics rooms and this should be reviewed annually.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The home economics department consists of three highly committed and reflective teachers. An innovative and dynamic approach is evident in how the home economics programme has evolved. For example, in a second-year wellbeing cookery module, all students prepare nutritious dishes and have the opportunity to enjoy these meals together as a class group.
- Very high levels of collaborative practice is evident in the planning and preparation for teaching.
- All programmes of work outline learning outcomes which are incremental and developmental. The development of practical and procedural skills should be included as learning outcomes in programmes of work. Good progress is being made in designing units of learning for Junior Cycle. Leaving Certificate programmes of work are highly developed

and identify specific methodologies, resources and modes of assessment which are aligned to learning outcomes. It is very good practice that these plans are reviewed annually and teachers' reflections inform change. TY plans are not as fully developed and should be reviewed so that appropriate methodologies, key skills, modes of assessment, resources utilised and evaluation strategies are an integral part of the programme.

- Subject department meetings are held weekly. The minutes of meetings reveal that teaching, learning and assessment feature as a key component of meetings and this is very good practice.
- An admirable range of extra-curricular activities is available to students and these contribute to the high profile of Home Economics in the school.
- Certificate examination results are analysed and compared to national averages. To build on this good work, it is recommended that the subject department examines and documents student attainment in certificate examinations alongside students' cognitive ability test results and attainment in other subjects. This will enable teachers to track students' progress and identify if students are performing above, in line with or below expectations.
- It is very good practice that subject department members record their observations on student achievements in certificate examinations and use this information in conjunction with their reflections on students' work, chief examiners reports, in-house examination results and inspection reports to identify areas for development. The subject department has implemented strategies to seek continuous improvements in teaching and learning. To further this very good work, it is now recommended that this process is structured and recorded so that the success of these strategies over time can be measured.
- It is commendable that all teachers are members of their subject association.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the deputy principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

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 of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good 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 outstanding 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	Good 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	Satisfactory 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	Fair 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	Weak 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;

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, having reviewed the Home Economics Inspection Report. The report affirms the very good practice of our Home Economics teachers across all areas of planning, teaching and learning. The professionalism, commitment and dedication of the teaching staff is evident in the feedback provided. The Board and teaching staff are committed to implementing the recommendations in the report in a timely fashion.

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 following actions have been taken in light of recommendations from the Inspection Report:

- In practical cookery lessons, as a class, all students now prepare and serve 1 chosen dish allowing students to focus on key skills and to facilitate more teacher-led spot demonstrations
- Subject plans have been modified and updated to include teacher reflection space to assist with collaborative feedback and future planning
- In future, a more formal written record outlining changes in curriculum, timelines, chosen options etc. will be maintained
- School management will carefully monitor the numbers of students assigned to practical classes, while also endeavouring to ensure access to a broad curriculum for all
- School management will work with the HE department to provide a more detailed risk assessment for both Dress Design Room and HE Kitchens.