

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Home Economics

REPORT

School name	St Louis High School
School address	Charleville Road Rathmines Dublin 6
Roll number	60890C

Date of Inspection: 14-02-2019



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	13 and 14 February, 2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

School context

St. Louis High School is a voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 630 girls. Home Economics is an optional subject at Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate level. The subject is also offered as an elective module in the Transition Year (TY) programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good with some exemplary practice observed.
- Home Economics has a high uptake at junior and senior cycle; a highly committed subject team engage in co-curricular and extra-curricular initiatives to promote the subject.
- Good evidence of self-assessment was observed in practical lessons; success criteria were co-generated in a minority of lessons.
- Very good oral formative feedback was provided to students during lessons; however there was an inconsistent approach to the provision of formative written feedback.
- The overall quality of whole-school support and subject provision is very good; senior management actively promotes a culture of continuous improvement in teaching, learning and reporting on assessment.
- Highly effective collaborative planning is evident.

Recommendations

- Teachers should co-generate success criteria with students to guide students when completing and assessing work.
- Teachers should further utilise written formative feedback to enhance students' learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Teachers modelled enthusiasm and enjoyment in learning and thereby created a very positive learning environment where students were self-motivated to engage, extend and enjoy their learning.
- Interactions among students and between students and teachers were very respectful and conducive to wellbeing. Students were able to work independently and collaboratively in a very purposeful and productive manner.
- A highly commendable range of co-curricular and extra-curricular events are organised by a very committed subject team. Students benefit from these experiences as they extend learning opportunities and provide occasions for students to display their learning beyond the classroom.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' work and behaviour, communicate these expectations effectively to students, and facilitate students in internalising them. Very good practice was observed in a textiles lesson when students were required to set their own targets for the completion of practical work and they were responsible for the achievement of these targets.
- Learning intentions were shared with students in all lessons. Best practice was noted when intentions were inclusive of the knowledge, understanding and skills which students should acquire. In most instances, teachers revisited and assessed students' attainment of the learning intentions. This very good practice should be extended to all lessons.
- Teachers maintained a balance between teacher voice and student voice. To revisit previously taught skills in a practical lesson, the teacher asked students to explain and demonstrate how procedural skills should be performed. Opportunities for additional peer teaching should be encouraged as they enable teachers to assess students' skills, refine skills and provide opportunities for students to learn from each other.
- In one lesson, exemplary practice of students co-generating success criteria was observed. This is highly effective practice as students had to isolate the characteristics of a good quality muffin. Students used the success criteria they collectively generated when evaluating their baked product at the conclusion of the lesson. This enabled students to accurately self-assess and identify specific areas where competence has been achieved and areas for improvement. The sharing and co-generation of success criteria should be extended to enable students to assess their work based on agreed standards.
- In some instances, teachers identified, displayed, explained and referred to key words during lessons. All teachers should adopt this practice. To extend this good practice, teachers should assess students' understanding of these identified words at the end of lessons. Key words should be systematically recorded and utilised so that these words are memorable.
- Teachers skilfully utilised questioning to encourage students to think and to assess students' learning. Questions were well distributed, directed and differentiated which enabled all students to positively participate and this provided many opportunities for student affirmation.
- Teachers provided good quality oral formative feedback to students during lessons on practical work and on homework answers. Additional written formative feedback is required on students' written homework and project work.

- Highly effective practice was noted in the teaching of food studies. The teacher strategically utilised spot demonstrations to teach procedural skills and very good teacher monitoring ensured that students refined their skills. Students were continuously encouraged to think about why they were utilising ingredients and implementing procedures in a particular way. This enabled students to see the relevance of what they had learned in theory lessons and apply this knowledge in a real life context.
- A wide array of craft items viewed displayed very high levels of creativity and skill.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of whole school support and subject provision is very good; senior management actively promotes a culture of continuous improvement in teaching, learning and reporting on assessment.
- Students are afforded very good access to Home Economics. Optional bands are generated from student preferences and a taster programme assists first-year students to make informed decisions. Other supports are in place to support senior cycle subject choice.
- Appropriate timetabled provision is made for Home Economics. Classes are well distributed across the week.
- Home Economics facilities comprise two kitchens and one textiles room. Specialist rooms are well resourced and maintained. Very deliberate efforts have been made to create stimulating learning environments. Furthermore, the corridors adjacent to Home Economics classrooms showcase engaging student work. This plays an important role in promoting Home Economics and can positively support student wellbeing as students see their work displayed.
- Positively, the Home Economics department is using the Health and Safety Authority risk assessment template. On some occasions, the kitchen is used as a multipurpose classroom and the risk assessment template should be extended to reflect this. The Home Economics department should undertake an annual risk assessment review of specialist facilities and share the document with senior management so that it can be included as part of the whole-school health and safety statement.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Highly effective collaborative planning is evident in generating programmes of work. Resources are collectively designed and stored in an online folder. This is very good practice as resources can be easily accessed and customised to reflect students' needs.
- Teachers recognise the value of constructive collaborative practice and this is intrinsic to how the subject department operates. Teachers view collaboration as a means to improve student learning and to enhance their own professional development.
- Subject planning is well advanced. Schemes of work are detailed and facilitate an incremental development of knowledge. It is very good practice that senior cycle schemes of work are adjusted annually to enable students to have the knowledge and skills necessary before undertaking coursework tasks. Schemes of work should be extended to outline the procedural skills developed in practical lessons.

- A very relevant and engaging TY module is being taught. It is praiseworthy that this module enables students to explore material which students may not have the opportunity to study at junior or senior cycle. To further develop the TY plan, learning outcomes should be articulated. It is very positive that challenging and engaging assessment tasks have been designed. The practice of sharing success criteria with students should be further developed in advance of completing assessment tasks and used as a framework for formative feedback.
- Detailed minutes of meetings have been routinely recorded. A very comprehensive subject plan provides a very useful resource for existing teachers and newly appointed teachers.
- It is very good practice that an incremental and developmental approach to teaching the design brief process is evident.
- A culture of reflective practice is evident in the Home Economics department. Teachers reflect on their individual practice and record observations about the effectiveness of teaching strategies employed. Commendably, these reflections inform future planning and teaching.
- A systematic approach to planning for continued improvements in teaching and learning and formally reviewing existing initiatives is in need of further development. To structure the delivery of continued improvements in teaching and learning, an action plan should be devised. This plan should include short, medium and long term goals for the Home Economics department and outline how and when actions to achieve these goals are to be implemented and evaluated.
- It is commendable that all teachers are members of the Association of Teachers of Home Economics (ATHE).

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

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 (BOM) is delighted with the extremely positive findings of this report. It is particularly pleased to note that the overall quality of teaching and learning is placed in the top category of very good with some exemplary practices also being recognised. The BOM is delighted that the enthusiasm and enjoyment for learning modelled by the Home Economics' teachers created very positive learning environments and that interactions among students and teachers were very respectful and conducive to wellbeing, whilst maintaining high expectations for students' work and behaviour. The BOM will continue to support the range of co-curricular and extra-curricular events which are being organised by the Home Economics department.

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 Home Economics department has already embarked on the implementation of the recommendations as outlined in the report, in order to further enhance the positive learning experiences for our students.

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;