

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Home Economics

REPORT

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| School name | Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School |
| School address | Mourne Road Drimnagh Dublin 12 |
| Roll number | 60991I |

Date of Inspection: 23-09-2019



**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

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| Dates of inspection | 20-09-2019 and 23-09-2019 |
| 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 three lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff |

School context

Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School is a co-educational voluntary school under the trusteeship of Catholic Education an Irish Schools' Trust (CEIST) and has a current enrolment of 308 students. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan for inclusion. The Junior Cycle, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the established Leaving Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) are all offered by the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was fair; a lack of thorough preparation for lessons impacted on the quality of students' learning.
- Teacher enthusiasm ensured a welcoming classroom atmosphere was created and interactions were positive, supportive and affirming.
- Learning intentions were created and evident on the whiteboard; in many instances these lacked clarity and were not referenced during the lesson.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole school support was satisfactory.
- The overall quality of planning and preparation was fair; programmes of work and the subject plan are significantly underdeveloped.

Recommendations

- Lessons should be thoroughly prepared to ensure accuracy in the delivery of lesson content and in the demonstration of practical skills.
- Clear learning intentions should be created, referenced during lessons and assessed.
- Senior management should continue to endeavour to employ a fully-qualified post-primary home economics teacher to deliver the home economics programme.
- Learning outcomes which support an incremental, developmental and personalised approach to learning should be created and clear timeframes for their delivery generated; junior cycle planning should be progressed.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was fair; a lack of subject-specific knowledge and skills was evident in the delivery of lessons and this impacted on the quality of students' learning.
- A very enthusiastic teacher created an affirming classroom environment and a positive rapport was evident.
- Students' behaviour in the lessons observed was good. Good routines were evident in the practical lesson observed.
- Positively, students were confident to ask and answer questions in lessons.
- A lack of thorough preparation for lessons impacted on the quality of student learning. Thorough preparation for lessons should be undertaken by the teacher to ensure accuracy in the delivery of lesson content and in the demonstration of practical skills. It is recommended that the teacher anticipates the questions students may ask and prepares answers accordingly.
- Learning intentions were written on the board at the start of lessons. In some instances, an insufficient number of learning intentions were planned for. Many of the learning intentions shared were vague and needed to be more specific to outline what students should know, understand and be able to do as a result of the learning experience. It is recommended that learning intentions are clear, revisited throughout lessons and assessed during lessons to ensure that the intended learning has taken place.
- Digital presentations were used to project information and images. Opportunities for the teacher and students to use information and communications technology (ICT) to further support learning should be investigated.
- It is positive that students have created attainment targets and these were recorded in their homework diaries.
- Students were active in their learning in a practical lesson. In theory lessons, opportunities need to be created for students to be active in their learning. Teaching approaches to support this could include problem-solving activities, well-structured group work tasks and online quizzes which support formative assessment.
- It is positive that spot demonstrations were appropriately used by the teacher to demonstrate practical skills. However, when demonstrating skills, it is imperative that best practice is modelled by the teacher to ensure that students develop and refine their skills to a high standard.
- In some instances, students were insufficiently challenged whilst others encountered difficulties when completing tasks. Given the mixed-ability nature of home economics classes, consideration should be given to differentiating learning intentions, activities and modes of assessment.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of whole school support and subject provision is satisfactory.
- Senior management is fully aware of its obligations, under circular 0031/2011, but despite considerable efforts to recruit a suitably qualified home economics teacher, a subject specialist is not deployed to teach Home Economics. As a consequence of the above, senior management decided not to offer Home Economics as a subject option to incoming first year, fifth year and TY students.
- Timetabling arrangements are in line with specification and syllabus guidelines and a good distribution of lessons is evident across the week.
- The home economics facilities consist of one kitchen and one textiles room. Classrooms are well organised and well-resourced. 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 and a copy filed in the subject plan.
- Positively, two computer rooms are available in the school and these can be accessed by the home economics teacher through a booking system. Currently, the high demand for access to these facilities is reducing home economics students' access to ICT. Senior management should plan towards improved access to ICT facilities for home economics students.
- A well-devised teacher support scheme which enables teachers to peer observe and provide formative feedback to each other has been introduced by senior management. This is very good practice and should support continued improvements in teaching and learning. It is positive to note that the home economics department will participate in this initiative.
- In many home economics lessons, a second teacher has been deployed to provide additional support for students in lessons. Senior management in consultation with teachers should consider how this deployment is best structured to support students' identified learning needs.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning and preparation was fair; programmes of work and the subject plan are significantly underdeveloped.
- Programme plans for second year, third year, sixth year and LCA Hotel Catering and Tourism (HCT) were presented for evaluation. Currently, programme plans for second year, third year and sixth year consist of an outline of topics to be completed for each year group. In some instances, a lack of clarity exists in terms of the work to be covered and the timeframe within which topics should be taught. The sequencing of some topics in the existing plans does not facilitate a developmental and incremental approach to learning. It is recommended that learning outcomes are developed for all year groups and these should be inclusive of the knowledge, cognitive skills, and practical and procedural skills. Learning outcomes should be sequenced to allow for an incremental and developmental approach to learning.
- In time, learning outcomes should be aligned to teaching methodologies, resources and assessment modes suitable for the mixed-ability arrangement of class groups. Strategies to address DEIS targets should also be included in programme plans.
- Even though first year and fifth year Home Economics is not currently offered, these plans should be kept in the subject plan to provide a context to students' learning and to ensure a

broad and balanced approach to teaching the syllabus or specification is reflected in programme plans.

- It is recommended that planning for Junior Cycle Home Economics is progressed. Templates provided by the Junior Cycle for Teachers would provide an appropriate format to structure junior cycle planning.
- The HCT programme plans consists of the LCA HCT module descriptor which outlines learning outcomes for the programme. It is recommended that these outcomes are personalised to suit the learning needs and interests of the existing group of students and clear timeframes are created to outline how the programme is delivered.
- An assessment framework should be developed for current year groups to outline the format and frequency of student assessment.
- It is good practice that a folder of electronically accessed resources has been created. This has proved a useful resource for the newly appointed teacher. In order to support newly appointed teachers to the subject department, a concise overview of how the subject department operates should be documented by the subject department.
- Work completed and decisions made during formal subject planning time should be recorded and shared with senior management.
- It is praiseworthy that the teacher deployed to teach Home Economics has attended some professional development events. Since the home economics department is a single teacher department, to support ongoing improvements in teaching and learning, it is strongly recommended that the teacher joins a professional network and engages in professional discussions and training regarding teaching, learning and assessment in Home Economics.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teacher 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

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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 welcomes the report of the inspectorate into our Home Economics. The Board acknowledges the recommendations as set out in the report and is in the process of implementing the changes that were recommended.
- Senior management will continue to endeavour to employ a fully-qualified post-primary home economics teacher to deliver the home economics programme as it has since the curricular need for an additional home economics teacher arose in 2017. The Board is hopeful that an increase in the number of qualified home economic graduates nationally will alleviate the national shortage.
- Clear learning intentions are being created, referenced during lessons and assessed as part of the Whole-school approach to Teaching and Learning.
- Learning outcomes which support an incremental, developmental and personalised approach to learning are being created and clear timeframes for their delivery are being generated; junior cycle planning is being progressed.

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; |