### Subject Inspection in Home Economics

**REPORT**

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<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Saint Clare's College</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Ballyjamesduff County Cavan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>61051L</td>
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**Date of Inspection: 21-03-2017**
WHAT IS A 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. Learning, teaching 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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.
INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>20-03-2017 - 21-03-2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Discussion with principal and key staff</td>
<td>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interaction with students</td>
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SCHOOL CONTEXT
Saint Clare’s College is a co-educational diocesan catholic secondary school under the trusteeship of the Bishop of Kilmore. Current enrolment is 632 students. Home Economics is a very popular optional subject at Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate levels. A home economics module is provided in Transition Year (TY), while Hotel, Catering and Tourism (HCT) is a vocational specialism in the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The overall quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good; students’ learning was of a satisfactory standard.
- Students enjoy Home Economics; there is scope to develop some classroom practices to deepen students’ learning.
- The very good range of co-curricular activities provided enables students to apply their learning to contexts outside of the classroom.
- Whole-school support for Home Economics is very good; deployment of teachers to HCT needs review.
- A strong commitment to on-going professional development is evident among the recently formed home economics teaching team.
- Teachers’ collaborative planning is good; some aspects of programme planning need further development.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- To provide for high-quality learner experiences, teaching and learning approaches should be deployed strategically to challenge students to build on and evaluate their learning in all lessons.
- The range of summative assessment modes should be extended to include an assessment of relevant practical coursework components.
- Timetabling of HCT should be reviewed so that only one teacher is assigned to teach the class.
- The TY plan should be developed to include appropriately differentiated learning outcomes and assessment strategies that are aligned to the Transition Year Student Journal.
1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good and students’ learning was of a satisfactory standard. There was scope to enhance the depth of students’ learning through using some teaching approaches more strategically to challenge students to build on, consolidate and reflect on their progress.

- There was evidence of advance planning for all lessons, with some effective practice in the selection of resources to support learning. High-quality learning was noted in instances where the lesson structure built actively on students’ prior knowledge and supported incremental learning. On occasion, there was scope to adjust the pace and pitch of lesson content to further consolidate learning.

- Lessons were conducted in an affirming and supportive atmosphere. A very good rapport was apparent between students and teachers. Students enjoyed their learning and were well able to work in groups, when challenged to do so.

- Learning intentions were shared with students in most lessons. Best practice was apparent when the intentions were phrased in terms of what students should be able to do, and re-visited as a means of assessing actual progress. Given the spread of student abilities, further attention should be given to planning for appropriately differentiated learning intentions.

- Teachers made good efforts to facilitate active learning but further consideration should be given to how students process and apply their learning from group tasks. On occasion, there was over-reliance on teacher input or there was insufficient processing of student-led tasks. Strategies that enable students to clearly articulate, process and apply their learning should be integrated into all lessons.

- Electronic presentations containing high-quality visual images were used to good effect in lessons. In one lesson, students made very good use of a mind map to make summary notes from the presentation; this proved very effective in supporting students to actively summarise and reflect on key points of learning.

- Questioning was a popular formative assessment strategy observed in lessons. However, questions tended to be lower-order, requiring very brief answers. Further use of higher-order questions with increased wait time is recommended to get students to develop answers, apply information, and foster deeper understanding.

- Student copybooks were well organised with good routines in the assignment of written tasks evident. Some good formative feedback was noted on students’ work. There is scope to extend this very good practice to other areas of coursework such as the HCT key assignments.

- Observation of practical coursework in craft and design indicated that students are exposed to a wide range of craft skills. A commendable focus is placed on the design phase of the work and this has resulted in students having a strong sense of ownership of their work.

- A commendable focus was placed on developing learner autonomy in the practical food studies lesson observed but there was scope to adjust the range of teaching approaches used. While most students displayed a satisfactory range of practical skills, additional strategies, in
particular spot demonstrations, should be used to refine students’ culinary skills and promote high-quality learner outcomes.

- At the time of the evaluation, the grade awarded for the end-of-term examinations was based on a written paper only. The range of summative assessment modes should be extended to provide for an assessment of the relevant practical coursework component.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support for the provision of Home Economics is very good. Students have very good access to Home Economics. The short subject-sampling programme in first year assists students to make informed subject choices. Option bands are generated based on students’ preferences.

- There has been considerable movement in the staffing of the subject department in recent times. At the time of the evaluation, a recently formed team was in place. The team is strongly committed to the on-going development of the subject and a good level of engagement with relevant continuing professional development (CPD) is evident. Good procedures are in place to support continuity in student learning.

- Overall, there is a very good level of timetabled provision for the subject, but the deployment of staff to HCT need to be reviewed. Currently, three teachers share the teaching of the HCT class group comprising LCA students in fifth and sixth year. This arrangement presents significant challenges in providing highly effective learner experiences. Timetabling for HCT should be reviewed so that only one teacher is assigned to teach the class.

- The specialist rooms are well organised and maintained as vibrant learning environments. Health and safety procedures are well established.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning and preparation is good; some aspects of programme plans need further development.

- Programme plans have been developed for all year groups. There is scope to amend the plans reviewed to provide for an enhanced integrated and incremental approach to the development of students’ theoretical knowledge, practical and procedural skills. It was noted that teachers are using the current plans as working documents and some very good reflections were noted. This information should be used to inform the next stage of planning.

- The TY plan would benefit from differentiation. Learning outcomes that are appropriately differentiated to cater for the needs of students who have not studied Home Economics previously, while also providing appropriate challenge for those who have, should be incorporated into the plan.

- The school has developed a very valuable Transition Year Journal to enable students to reflect on their learning in TY. There is significant potential to develop clearer links between TY Home Economics and this valuable student resource. The TY home economics plan should be further developed to include assessment strategies and criteria that are aligned the TY opportunities and assessment strategies outlined in the student journal.
• A very good range of co-curricular activities is provided to enable students to apply their learning to contexts outside of the classroom.

• Student outcomes in the certificate examinations are examined regularly. The subject team should use the emergent trends to devise an action plan that identifies specific teaching and learning priorities and targets for the next phase of subject department planning.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.
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 the school’s provision of each area.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Very Good</strong></td>
<td><em>Very good</em> 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 <strong>outstanding</strong> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.</td>
<td>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</td>
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<td><strong>Good</strong></td>
<td><em>Good</em> 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 very good standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong></td>
<td><em>Satisfactory</em> 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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<td><strong>Fair</strong></td>
<td><em>Fair</em> 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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<td><strong>Weak</strong></td>
<td><em>Weak</em> 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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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