

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Home Economics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Drogheda Grammar School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Mornington Road Drogheda Co Louth
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	63870L

Date of Inspection: 02-10-2018



**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 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.

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

Date of inspection	02-10-2018
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 and relevant staff

School context

Drogheda Grammar School is a co-educational fee-charging school with a current enrolment of 352 students. The school provides the Junior Cycle, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate Programmes. Home Economics is an optional subject at junior cycle and Leaving Certificate levels. Home Economics is also provided as part of TY.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good.
- Students were motivated to engage in and enjoy their learning in Home Economics; a very good rapport was evident in all of the lessons observed.
- There was scope to enhance the depth of students' learning through more strategic use of some teaching approaches.
- The exemplary range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities provided through Home Economics enables students to apply their learning in contexts outside of the classroom.
- Subject provision and whole-school support for Home Economics is very good; though current timetabling arrangements need close monitoring.
- Subject planning is very good overall; some aspects of planning for teaching and learning need further development.

Recommendations

- Learning intentions for lessons should promote an enhanced developmental and integrated approach to student learning.
- The impact of lessons of one-hour duration on the overall quality of students' learning in practical food studies needs to be closely monitored.
- Programme plans should be reviewed to support an integrated and incremental approach to students' learning across relevant syllabus strands.
- An assessment framework should be developed for students' summative assessment in TY Home Economics.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good. There was scope to enhance the depth of students' learning experiences in some instances.
- A very good rapport was evident in all lessons. Deliberate efforts were made to create an inclusive classroom environment. In each lesson the class teacher's own enthusiasm for the subject motivated students to engage with lesson content and enjoy their learning.
- Planning and preparation for all lessons was good, with some effective use of additional resources. The potential of digital media in enhancing learning could be explored further.
- Learning intentions were shared in all lessons, which provided a focus for students. A good range of student-centred teaching approaches was incorporated into lessons.
- In some lessons, there was scope to increase the depth of treatment of new content knowledge and to integrate learning from across syllabus strands. Further consideration should be given to the selection of learning intentions, to ensure that students' knowledge is being developed in accordance with syllabus requirements. Opportunities to present information from across relevant syllabus strands should also be optimised. Learning intentions for all lessons should promote a developmental and integrated approach to student learning.
- In all lessons, a deliberate emphasis was placed on ensuring that students understood and used key subject-specific terminology. Relevant numeracy concepts were also well integrated into the learning activities.
- In theoretical lessons, students were given opportunities to reflect on their prior learning and discuss lesson content with their peers. The learning potential of these activities would have been strengthened by additional whole-class input on new lesson content. This would enable students to more thoroughly process and apply new learning.
- In the practical lesson observed, a highly commendable focus was placed on developing learner autonomy. Students were very well organised and demonstrated very good practical and procedural skills. Students were well able to work independently and in teams. However, there was insufficient time in the one-hour lesson to facilitate highly-effective learner outcomes and experiences. Students did not have enough time to complete the full range of food preparation and cooking tasks assigned, and could not evaluate their work.
- A good range of formative assessment strategies was evident in the lessons observed. It is good practice that summative examinations include a practical coursework component.
- 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 project task and this has contributed to the students having a strong sense of ownership of their work.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole-school support for Home Economics is very good, though timetabled provision for practical lessons needs close monitoring.
- The school provides a commendable range of supports to assist first-year students make informed subject choices. Option bands are determined by students' preferences. Uptake of Home Economics is very good. The exemplary range of co-curricular and extra-curricular

activities planned in Home Economics maintains a positive profile for the subject and enables participating students to apply their learning to contexts outside of the classroom.

- Staff deployed to teach Home Economics are appropriately qualified and there is a very good level of engagement with continuing professional development (CPD).
- Timetabled provision for Home Economics needs close monitoring. One-hour lessons were recently introduced. Lessons are well spread throughout the teaching week and the overall time assigned to Home Economics is appropriate. However, lessons of one-hour duration are presenting challenges in facilitating highly-effective learner experiences and outcomes in practical food studies. As practical food studies is a key component of Home Economics in both junior and senior cycle, the impact of these timetable changes needs careful review. Lessons need to be of a duration that allows sufficient focus on the development of analytical, procedural and evaluative skills, as well as manipulative skills and theoretical knowledge.
- The specialist room for Home Economics is very well resourced and organised. Health and safety procedures are well established. The risk assessment template currently in use should be extended to take cognisance of the fact that the room is used for practical lessons in both food studies and textiles.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of subject planning is very good overall; aspects of programme planning need development.
- School management actively promotes a culture of on-going improvement and innovation in teaching and learning. There is a clear connection between subject-department planning and priorities established as part of the school's self-evaluation process.
- High-quality reflective practice is evident at subject department level. Good use is made of attainment data to inform planning for teaching and learning.
- Programme plans are well advanced with good practice noted in planning for integrating the *Design Brief Process*. Learning intentions are well developed for theoretical aspects of Home Economics. However, modifications to the lesson sequence and range of planned food studies practical coursework are necessary. This will provide for an enhanced integrated and incremental approach to the development of students' theoretical knowledge, practical, and procedural skills. Programme plans should be presented as a sequence of lessons that provides an integrated and incremental approach to students' learning across relevant syllabus strands.
- Planning for the recently-introduced Junior Cycle Home Economics specification is in the early stages. A commendable focus is being placed on supporting *Junior Cycle Key Skills* through classroom practice. The home economics department is engaging fully with relevant CPD to support this work.
- A very good TY home economics module has been devised. Learning outcomes encompass a very good range of knowledge and practical skills. An assessment framework should be developed to inform students' final assessment in TY Home Economics. This framework should include success criteria which are aligned to the key knowledge and skills being developed. These criteria should inform the design of students' summative assessment.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the 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

The Board of Management of Drogheda Grammar School is very pleased with the Home Economics Inspection Report and its observations and findings.

The comments in relation to Teaching and Learning, Subject and Whole School Support and Planning and Preparation are positive and reflect well overall on the staff, students and school. The Board welcomes the acknowledgement of the good quality teaching and learning taking place in the school and that this has been recognised in several inspections.

We also appreciated that it was noticed that our students were “motivated to engage in and enjoy their learning in Home Economics” and that a very good rapport was evident in all of the lessons observed”.

The Board is also glad the school’s commitment to its extra-curricular programme is recognised by its “exemplary range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities provided through Home Economics enables students to apply their learning in contexts outside of the classroom.”

It also noted the comments regarding the deliberate efforts that were made to create an inclusive classroom environment, that our students were given opportunities to reflect on their prior learning and discuss lesson content with their peers and that highly commendable focus was placed on developing learner autonomy.

Finally on a whole school level we were glad to note that School management actively promotes a culture of on-going improvement and innovation in teaching and learning.

Overall the inspection was a positive experience which highlighted the dedication, effort and quality of 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 Board of Management, Senior Management and staff welcome the recommendations of this report. We, as a school community, are committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning in our school and we value reflection on our practice and any advice given.

As a whole school we continue to monitor our subject provision and impact of 1 hour classes. Overall it has been a positive experience for our students and teachers but we will monitor it as advised and ensure the Home Economics department is supported, particularly with regard to the planning and execution of practical lessons.

The Home Economics department will review its planning and ensure content/learning intentions from other syllabus strands are brought into lessons where relevant. This will support the 1 hour lessons and allow for greater depth and more integration. Lesson sequences will also refer to suggested practical lessons rather than being planned separately.

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;