

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

Subject Inspection in Home Economics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	De La Salle College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Newtown Waterford
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	649500

Date of Inspection: 18 and 19 October 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. 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.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	18 and 19 October 2017
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 eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principals and relevant staff

School context

De la Salle College, which is under the auspices of the Le Chéile Schools' Trust, is an all-boys school with an enrolment of 1,130. The curriculum includes: Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate (Established) programme, and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. A small number of targeted junior cycle students participate in the Junior Cycle School Programme (JCSP).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from outstanding to fair, with lesson planning and teacher intervention needing to be strengthened where the quality was less than satisfactory.
- Higher-order thinking skills were well promoted in lessons where teaching was found to be very good or outstanding.
- Teaching is being informed by the principles of formative assessment, although teachers demonstrate varying levels of understanding and implementation of related strategies.
- In practical food studies lessons, students were well supported to develop both practically and personally.
- Overall, provision and support for Home Economics is good, although more systematic planning for subject resourcing is required.
- Programmes of work have been prepared, although it is noted that their value could be enhanced.

Recommendations

- In order to improve teaching and learning in instances where the quality was found to be fair, either more time should be devoted to planning and preparation, or further teacher input or intervention should be provided when students are working independently or collaboratively.
- Deeper exploration of formative assessment at subject department level should take place, and a systematic and incremental approach to the incorporation of formative assessment strategies should be agreed.
- A subject-specific resourcing plan needs to be developed.
- Outline programmes of work should be reorganised in order to increase their role in guiding a departmental approach to teaching and learning

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from outstanding to fair.
- Practice was noted as outstanding or very good when students were: supported to make valuable links between prior learning or experiences and new information; facilitated to work independently and collaboratively, and in doing so, were assigned tasks that were appropriately pitched and that promoted understanding and learning; assisted to effectively complete assigned tasks by very good quality teacher inputs, monitoring of student participation, and very good quality resources; encouraged to apply, analyse, evaluate and create.
- Where teaching and learning was found to be fair, it was recommended that more time be devoted to lesson planning in order that: good quality learning intentions are constructed; appropriate student activities and resources are designed and prepared; teacher inputs are well planned; assessment is accommodated. Otherwise, where the quality was noted as fair, it was recommended that additional teacher input be provided when students demonstrate a lack of understanding or when a planned activity appears to be too difficult. In this scenario, it is advised that interventions could include a blend of: revision of key information; teacher modelling and demonstration; enhanced monitoring; and the provision of one-to-one support and advice.
- While all teachers utilised a very student-centred approach to lesson delivery, at times students were found to be either under challenged or over challenged.
- In practical food studies lessons, students were well supported to: develop culinary skills; recognise the value of following process and procedure; understand the importance of hygiene, safety and resource management; work independently and collaboratively; and become personally responsible for their work and the related learning.
- Teachers' work is being informed by the principles of formative assessment. This was evident both in the design and delivery of lessons, as well as in the monitoring and correction of student work. Teachers demonstrate varying levels of understanding and implementation of related strategies, and so it would be valuable to provide for a deeper exploration of formative assessment at subject department level. 'Focus on Learning', a relatively recent publication of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), is a valuable resource that would inform and support this work. A systematic and incremental approach to the incorporation of formative assessment strategies should be agreed.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Overall, provision and support for Home Economics is good, although more systematic planning for subject resourcing is required. Considering the school's budgetary constraints, a creative approach will need to be adopted in relation to the development of a maintenance, updating and replacement plan. A related review of the subject's current and future resource requirements should be informed by a 'resourcing to support teaching and learning' rationale. The effectiveness of the subject's existing information and communications technology (ICT) should form part of this review.

- It is important to acknowledge the progressive vision which resulted in Home Economics being offered to the boys of De La Salle College in 1998. Almost two decades later, uptake levels are healthy. In general, it is offered as an optional subject, although it is compulsory for students completing JCSP, and all TY students complete a half-year, home economics module. Hotel, Catering and Tourism is also offered as a vocational specialism for LCA students.
- Students' preferences inform the design of subject blocks, and this helps to ensure an equality of access for all students. That said, annually, and due primarily to the fact that the school only accommodates one kitchen, as well as the popularity of the subject in both junior and senior cycles, a number of students do not get to study Home Economics. The board is being proactive in seeking to address this finding, and has applied to the Department of Education and Skills for a second kitchen.
- Whilst acknowledging the challenges of timetabling three teachers for one kitchen, timetabling of the subject in the current school year is very good. Management is encouraged to continue to seek to avoid the consecutive timetabling of double periods for two or more class groups, as this ensures that all classes have equal access to the practical component of Home Economics, and it provides teachers with greater flexibility in terms of curriculum planning. The timetabling of a triple for Hotel, Catering and Tourism is suggested for consideration, and it is recommended that the same amount of time be allocated to all junior cycle classes.
- Teachers' participation in activities designed to develop their pedagogical knowledge, understanding and skills, including the correction of certificate examinations, is both encouraged and supported by management.
- A subject-specific health and safety statement is in place, although it was found that it does not adequately address the potential hazards linked to the lack of mechanical ventilation and the nature of the room's floor covering. The statement should also document the controls that the teachers implement in order to manage these potential hazards.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- As a result of good quality co-ordination, facilitation of formal meetings, and a commitment to planning, a well-developed subject plan exists. It is positive that within the plan consideration is given to strategies linked to the school's improvement plan.
- Outline programmes of work have been prepared, but their value and relevance needs to be enhanced. To this end, it is recommended that the content be reorganised so that each programme is: clearly grounded in a set of overarching learning outcomes specific to each year group; presented in a manner that illustrates that an incremental approach is being employed to teaching and learning; explicit in relation to how the integration of theory and practical, as well as topics, is accommodated.
- While teachers are commended for their efforts in preparing more detailed programmes of work, these should be further developed in time to include the identification of topic-specific resources, methodologies and assessment approaches.
- The TY programme of work should be revisited to ensure a learning experience that is less reminiscent of junior cycle Home Economics and more in support of the development of new knowledge and skills for all TY students. It is further suggested that there might be value in grounding the sixteen-week programme in a theme, and planning around concept and process rather than dishes to be prepared and cooked.

- While the subject plan demonstrates teachers' engagement with review and reflection relative to students' results in the certificate examinations, it does not reflect their ongoing reflections relative to, for example, provision and support. Neither does it capture their proactivity in addressing concerns. To this end, it is suggested that the plan should seek to document the teachers' review and reflection processes, resulting developmental priorities and related action plans.
- Planning and preparation for most lessons was of a very high quality.

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

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

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of De La Salle College Waterford acknowledges receipt of the Home Economics Inspection Report on behalf of the whole school community. The board is pleased that in some cases the quality of teaching and learning is described as "outstanding" but is concerned at the description of some teaching and learning in the subject as only "fair". Where the quality of teaching and learning is below standard, the board will address this concern and seek improvement. The Board notes that while overall provision and support for Home Economics is good, more systematic planning for resourcing is required. Unfortunately, this will pose major difficulties for the board in light of current financial constraints. Comments in the report of timetabling of Home Economics are welcomed where overall provision and support are deemed to be good and more systematic planning for subject resourcing will be addressed by school management in so far as this is possible within existing resources. The existence of a well-developed subject plan for Home Economics is noted and that planning and preparation for most lessons is of a high quality.

Area 2 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 acknowledges the findings and recommendations in the Home Economics Inspection Report. The Board will commence discussion on issues raised and will take the necessary action to implement them where possible. The Principal and the senior management team will address the need to improve teaching and learning, where the quality was found to be fair, with the teachers concerned by discussing with them the findings in the report and by putting in place strategies with the teachers concerned. All teachers in the Home Economics department will be requested to state how they plan to develop a systematic and developmental approach to formative assessment strategies. The Board will undertake to develop a resourcing plan for Home Economics within the context of existing resources. The Home Economics department will be requested to examine their programmes of work and to suggest how the role of such programmes can be reorganised to improve teaching and learning. The Board is aware that the Home Economics facilities available are inadequate and applied to the Department of Education and Skills last January for funding to provide additional accommodation for the subject. No response has been received from the Department to date. The Safety Statement will be amended in relation to Home Economics to address the potential hazards referred to in the report. The Board of Management in consultation with the Principal and Deputy Principals and the Home Economics department will keep the recommendations outlined in the report under review and will monitor progress to ensure compliance. The Board is committed to carry out its obligations and duties in this regard to the best of its ability.