

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

**Subject Inspection in Home Economics**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Our Lady Of Mercy Secondary School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Ozanam St. Waterford
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	64971W

**Date of Inspection: 16-03-2017**



**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.

## Subject Inspection

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	15-03-2017 and 16-03-2017
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Our Lady of Mercy is a voluntary secondary school which offers Home Economics as an optional subject in junior cycle and in senior cycle. A compulsory module is provided as part of the school's optional Transition Year (TY) programme. The school has a current enrolment of 506 girls.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching ranged from very good to weak, determined largely by the approach to lesson design and delivery.
- Learning was very good where a highly student-centred approach was adopted to topic exploration, but weaker where a more traditional, lecture-style approach predominated.
- Questioning was the key inclusion strategy used in most lessons, but at times teachers' use of this valuable strategy could have been more effective.
- Teacher student relations were largely positive and respectful.
- Overall, provision and support for Home Economics is good
- Recent deployment challenges, and the related instability, have negatively impacted on subject department planning work.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- As relevant, teachers should reconsider their approach to lesson design and delivery to encompass approaches and strategies that shift the focus from teacher-led delivery to student-centred activity and learning.
- As necessary, and to inform better use of questioning, an exploration of what constitutes effective questioning should be undertaken by teachers, both individually and collectively as a subject department.
- Management should consider how the teacher allocation might be best used to support better quality teaching and learning in Home Economics.
- Subject department planning and preparation, both process and product, are in need of significant development, in line with the advice offered in the report.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from very good to weak.
- Where teaching and learning was very good, a highly student-centred approach was evident, and students were required to participate actively in the lesson, and in a variety of ways. The plan for the lesson was shared through the presentation of a set of meaningful learning intentions, which emphasised student activity and learning. Opportunities for students to work both independently and collaboratively were provided, with close teacher monitoring of participation that, in turn, supported the provision of acknowledgement and advice to students. The explicit sharing of the criteria for success with students, in order to guide their participation in a task, was also noted as very good practice.
- By contrast, where the quality was less than good, a more traditional, lecture-style approach predominated. While this was complemented with some questioning of students, and some provision for student note taking, students were largely passive. On occasion too, teachers did not sufficiently stop to discuss or explore content with students, and this resulted in students appearing overwhelmed and, at times, they became confused. As relevant, teachers should reconsider their approach to lesson design and delivery to encompass approaches and strategies that shift the focus from teacher-led delivery to student-centred activity and learning.
- As alluded to previously, questioning was used as the main means of involving students in the majority of lessons. At times, however, it was found that questioning could have been more effective. To this end, relevant teachers are referred to the *Focus on Learning* resource pack produced by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).
- With regard to the use of note taking, teachers are advised to reconsider the value in having students note down information that is presented in a similar format to that provided in their textbooks. Teaching students to note make is suggested as a more valuable activity to engage in with students, as this will help students to manage, understand and assimilate information.
- Teacher student relations were largely positive and respectful. This provides a good basis for the more student-centred, instructional methods recommended above.
- In the observed practical food studies lesson, it was found that students' participation and outcomes would have been enhanced by the provision of more carefully planned and staged teacher inputs. It is advised that better use be made of the 'down time': the space that opens up when the clear up is complete and students are waiting for their dishes to finish cooking.
- Where teaching and learning was weak, it was recommended that the teacher become more familiar with syllabus content, and that provision be made for the more timely and meaningful preparation of students for the Junior Certificate, food and culinary skills, practical examination.
- At times, students' copybooks did not provide a good record of the work undertaken since the beginning of the school year. As relevant, teachers are advised to ensure that students are supported to maintain copybooks or files that are an accurate reflection of work completed, including class work, homework or assessment activities. Simultaneously, it is recommended that the monitoring of students' written work be increased, to include regular provision of constructive feedback to students.

### 2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision and support for Home Economics is good.
- It is a popular subject, demonstrating strong uptake levels.

- The construction of optional subject bands is influenced by students' choices, a practice which supports access to Home Economics.
- Management has experienced significant deployment challenges recently, whilst seeking to employ suitably qualified teachers when substitute teachers have been required. However, at the time of the inspection, four, suitably qualified, substitute teachers were deployed.
- Where there are a number of Home Economics class groups within a year group, management seeks to ensure that either all, or almost all, teachers are involved.
- It is recommended that the teaching of TY Home Economics be rotated amongst teachers.
- Timetabling of Home Economics is appropriate, with a clear sensitivity to ensuring an equality of access to a kitchen for all class groups.
- Management and teachers described the subject as well resourced. It is suggested that the resourcing of the subject into the future be informed by the preparation of a resourcing plan, identifying maintenance requirements, equipment needing replacement or upgrading, and required, new items.
- The subject-specific, health and safety statement should be reviewed annually, and a hazard analysis risk assessment approach should be adopted. Context-specific hazards should be addressed in the statement.
- Whilst acknowledging the complexities of making optimal use of allocations, the challenge of timetabling, and the high demand for the subject in the school, management should consider how the teacher allocation might be best used to support better quality teaching and learning in Home Economics.

### **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject department planning, both process and product, requires significant development.
- The recent deployment challenges, and the related instability surrounding the composition of the teaching team, have negatively impacted on subject department planning. As a result, the ideal of a highly co-ordinated and cohesive approach to planning is not a current reality.
- The subject plan contains much relevant subject documentation, but only a small number of context-specific documents. Key missing elements include: review activities and related action plans; subject-specific planning linked to the school's identified school self-evaluation (SSE) targets; and a subject-specific assessment policy, that is differentiated for each class group.
- Existing programmes of work are outline in nature. These should be grounded in a set of overarching, year-group specific, learning outcomes. They should be developmental in nature, and clearly demonstrate integration of theory, practical, project and journal work. In time, more detailed programmes of work should be developed which identify, on a topic-by-topic basis, the actual resources, methodologies and assessment tasks employed.
- It is suggested that the TY programme of work be grounded in concept and process, rather than dishes to be prepared and cooked. Furthermore, consideration should be given to removing the craft element, which is highly reminiscent of junior cycle, whilst giving consideration to the introduction of content that would support the development of new knowledge and skills.
- In the existing analysis of student outcomes in both of the certificate examinations, it is necessary for teachers to contextualise and elaborate on the tables which are generated by providing a written analysis of outcomes.
- At times, individual teacher planning for lesson delivery was found to be inconsistent with agreed programmes of work. On occasion, valid reasons were provided for this lack of

consistency, but at other times the deviation was not justifiable. In order to ensure full coverage of content, as well as to foster greater teacher collaboration and sharing relative to teaching and learning of specific topics, it is recommended that all teachers adhere to agreed programme plans.

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. 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.

# **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 acknowledges the value of this inspection report and is conscious of the recommendations contained in it. This school is committed to the promotion and development of excellence in the provision of Home Economics. The Board acknowledges the main findings in the report which confirm that learning was very good where a highly student-centred approach was adopted, the provision and support for Home Economics is good and that recent deployment challenges have negatively impacted on subject department planning work.

The Board is committed to supporting the teachers in following up on the recommendations made by the Inspectorate with a view to building on current good practice.

### **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 various recommendations made in the report are being considered by management and the Home Economics department as part of their on-going planning practices. The Management will address the teacher allocation and deployment in Home Economics as far as is practicable. The Home Economics department is reviewing the TY programme, developing the HACCP plan and developing an action plan to address the issues outlined in the inspection 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 quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;