

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

Subject Inspection in Home Economics

REPORT

School name	St. Mary's Secondary School
School address	Nenagh County Tipperary
Roll number	65380E

Date of Inspection: 03-10-2019



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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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

Dates of inspection	02-10-19 and 03-10-2019
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 four lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and key staff

School context

St. Mary's Secondary School is a voluntary school with a current enrolment of 451 female students. It is under trusteeship of Catholic Education an Irish Schools' Trust (CEIST). Home Economics is offered as an optional subject in the Junior Cycle programme and in the Leaving Certificate programme. Childcare/Community Care is provided as a vocational specialism and Hotel Catering and Tourism is provided as an elective module in the Leaving Certificate Applied programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good, with students having opportunities to learn collaboratively and develop higher-order thinking skills.
- Clear learning intentions were shared and in some lessons these were referenced and assessed during the lesson.
- Evaluative and encouraging comments on the quality of students' work were evident; written formative feedback is limited.
- The overall quality of whole-school support is good; an upgrading and maintenance plan is not in place currently for Home Economics.
- Teachers work in a committed and collaborative manner and subject planning is very good.
- Data has been gathered on student attainment in certificate examinations but, as yet, limited analysis of this data takes place.

Recommendations

- Teachers should further utilise formative assessment strategies to explicitly assess students' attainment of learning intentions and implement a systematic approach to providing written formative feedback.
- An upgrading and maintenance schedule should be devised and implemented by school management in consultation with the home economics department.
- The subject department should reflect on students' predicted attainment in certificate examinations with actual attainment, and record these trends.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good.
- Teachers created a positive learning environment in which students were very well supported and encouraged to engage in class discussions and answer questions. Teachers were very affirming of students' contributions.
- Teachers modelled very high levels of enthusiasm for Home Economics and this greatly supported students' positive engagement and enjoyment of learning.
- Students displayed very good levels of subject-specific knowledge.
- Teachers shared and discussed clear learning intentions with students. Best practice was observed when learning intentions were referenced during lessons and students' attainment of learning intentions were assessed. Teachers should explicitly assess students' attainment of learning intentions during all lessons to ensure that the intended learning has taken place.
- Lesson structure facilitated continuity with learning from previous lessons. Students had opportunities to recall previous learning through the use of a quiz, brainstorming activities and teacher questioning.
- A very good balance was achieved between teacher inputs and opportunities for students to be active in their learning. In all lessons, students had opportunities to work independently and collaboratively. Very good use was made of think-pair-share activities which were structured by well-phrased, higher and lower-order questions and, in one instance, a Professional Development Service for Teachers 'think-pair-share' handout was used to record individual and paired work. Students were very familiar with this strategy and teachers facilitated a meaningful discussion of students' answers and contributions which supported learning.
- Students were provided with opportunities to engage in challenging activities which required higher-order thinking. In one lesson, students were required to review food packaging labels relating to fish and fish products and evaluate the nutritional value of these products. Students proposed why they thought the nutritional value of fish and fish products differed by integrating their knowledge of nutrients, classifications of fish and the nutritional effects of processing fish. Furthermore, students had opportunities to make additional co-curricular links when recommending varieties of fish for specific groups, for example for teenagers; this is indicative of very good practice.
- Good evidence of students generating their own notes was observed in copybooks and this strategy was used appropriately in lessons. Best practice was evident when teacher modelling of note-making was evident so that students could learn how to develop their note-making skills and personalise their notes.
- In some lessons, the use of digital media clips would have provided a visual reference to further illustrate teachers' explanations. This should be explored.
- In a practical lesson observed, spot demonstrations were very clear and used appropriately by the teacher to model practical skills. To complement spot demonstrations, whole-class instructions were delivered by the teacher using a very effective 'stop, look, listen' approach.
- Teachers made very good use of whiteboards which contained allocated sections for learning intentions, homework and key words.

- Teachers provided evaluative and very affirming comments on students' work and some formative feedback was provided. It is recommended that formative feedback be delivered on a more regular basis so that students are aware of their strengths as learners and areas for improvement.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of whole-school support is good. Timetabling is in line with syllabus and specification requirements. Lessons are well distributed throughout the week.
- Commendably, subject option bands are determined by students' preferences. A number of supports are in place to assist students in making informed subject choice decisions at junior and senior cycle. Positively, all Transition Year students participate in a home economics module. The school has traditionally provided a yearlong taster programme for first-year students which supports informed subject choice decisions. However, the length of the subject sampling programme should be reviewed and consideration given to reducing the length of the taster programme. This would extend the quantity of tuition time available for the exploration of learning outcomes in students' chosen areas of study.
- Students have very good access to the subject. The number of students in some class groups is large. Senior management should limit the number of students in home economics class groups so that student practical work can be carried out safely in the available facilities.
- It is good practice that both teachers are deployed to teach junior and senior cycle Home Economics as this develops capacity within the department and facilitates collaborative planning.
- The home economics facilities comprise two kitchens and one textiles room. The textiles room is very well resourced and maintained. Classrooms have been used creatively by teachers to display students' work and share eye-catching and engaging resources which support students' learning. The absence of significant upgrading or modernisation of the kitchen facilities is highly evident. It is recommended that school management, in consultation with the home economics department, devise a maintenance and upgrading plan as a matter of priority. School management should implement this plan as resources permit to provide high-quality learning environments.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Teachers work in a highly committed and collaborative manner to design and share electronic resources and learning acquired from continuing professional development events and subject association meetings.
- Concise, informative minutes of meetings, which outline areas discussed and agreed actions, are filed in the subject plan. It is very good practice that teaching, learning and assessment are discussed routinely at meetings.
- Subject planning is very good. In most instances, learning outcomes are outlined and aligned to specific teaching methodologies, resources, modes of assessment, and literacy and numeracy strategies. There is scope to further develop the Hotel Catering and Tourism module in line with the other very good practice observed. An incremental approach to the creation of learning outcomes for the development of practical and procedural skills should be planned for and integrated in programmes of work.

- Planning for junior cycle is progressing well. Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) templates are being utilised to support planning. It is commendable that teachers' written reflections are informing planning. Further opportunities for students to use information and communications technology to support and assess their learning should be considered when planning units of learning.
- Students are provided with opportunities to display their learning in contexts outside of the classroom. Most notably, one of the home economics teachers facilitates an extra-curricular costume-making workshop in which students create and alter costumes for the school musical.
- The subject department analyses certificate examination results. To build on this good practice, student attainment in certificate examinations should be analysed in the context of predicted achievement which may be informed by cognitive abilities test results, and attainment in school assessments. This facilitates the tracking of individuals and trends over time should be recorded in the subject plan.
- Trends arising from certificate examinations in conjunction with evidence from other sources including students' work, chief examiners reports, in-house examinations and teachers' reflections should be used to identify areas for improvement.
- Teachers should create an achievable action plan which outlines how a strategy to improve learners' experiences and outcomes will be utilised and its effectiveness evaluated by teachers.

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 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;