

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

**Subject Inspection in Home Economics**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Edmund Rice College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Carrigaline Co. Cork
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	68264R

**Date of Inspection: 06-11-2019**



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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 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.

## **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

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	05-11-19 & 06-11-19
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### School context

Edmund Rice College is a co-educational, voluntary secondary school, operating under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). Established in September 2016, 335 students are currently enrolled. The school provides the Junior Cycle programme and has introduced a compulsory Transition Year (TY) Programme this year. Leaving Certificate programmes will be provided in the future.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good, with some exemplary teaching observed across lessons; the potential for practice sharing at classroom level is significant.
- Teachers were highly informed, confident in their approach, and demonstrated a clear enthusiasm for both Home Economics and teaching.
- Students demonstrated very high levels of curiosity, eagerness and, at times, the courage to explore new learning experiences; they are being supported to truly flourish, both as learners and as human beings.
- A highly student-centred approach prevailed in lessons.
- Provision and support for Home Economics is satisfactory overall; a number of aspects are notably positive, but access to the subject in TY, as well as some timetabling practices, demonstrate room for improvement.
- The planning work of the subject department, including programme planning and lesson planning, is of a very high quality.

#### Recommendations

- Opportunities for in-class practice sharing should be explored as teachers have much to garner from one another and their highly effective approaches to teaching and learning.
- The decision to only offer TY Home Economics to students who studied the subject in Junior Cycle should be revised when resources permit.
- The shortfall in terms of the required minimum hours of timetabled student engagement in Home Economics, as well as in all optional subjects offered in the school, should be rectified as a priority.
- The approach to timetabling practical, food-studies lessons in the context of a timetable constructed around one-hour lesson periods needs further thought and action.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good, with some exemplary teaching observed across lessons.
- Careful consideration was given to student engagement and learning at design stage, ensuring that teachers delivered lessons that promoted very high levels of interest and participation, fostered very good levels of understanding, and forged an appreciation for new learning.
- The lesson plan was explicitly shared with students using well-constructed learning intentions. This approach provided opportunities to clearly outline teachers' expectations for hands-on student activity and learning. In one lesson, students were commendably given the opportunity to guess the plan through the sharing of a relevant visual.
- Opportunities to revisit and revise prior learning, as well as to reveal future learning were well exploited.
- Teachers were highly informed, confident in their approach, and demonstrated a clear enthusiasm for both Home Economics and teaching.
- Teachers encouraged, affirmed, challenged and supported students. Students responded positively, demonstrating very high levels of curiosity, eagerness and, at times, the courage to explore new learning experiences. The latter refers specifically to blind tasting activities planned for one class group. Students are being supported to truly flourish, both as learners and human beings.
- A highly student-centred approach prevailed in all lessons. Students' engagement and participation was facilitated through: constant posing of questions; continuous seeking of responses and reactions; and regular assignment of mini tasks. At times, teachers' organisation of tasks facilitated students to work collaboratively; this is further encouraged. On occasion, it was advised that learning linked to tasks could have been enhanced by additional task processing.
- Teachers were very effective in their use of questioning. Best practice was observed when there was a good balance between questioning for recall and questioning to develop students' capacity to think critically and creatively.
- In response to a recommendation provided in a recent Mathematics inspection, it is commendable that teachers are supporting students to develop note-making skills.
- It is very positive that TY students were facilitated to work independently in a practical food studies lesson, and that they were supported to personally select a dish suited to the brief being explored. Students' skills were very well developed and they demonstrated an admirable level of confidence. This is attributable to the manner in which they have been taught in junior cycle.
- Homework designed to build on learning in lessons was assigned. The advance unpacking of related requirements with students was noted as very positive practice.
- Subject-specific themes of resourcefulness and sustainability were embedded in lessons, a keyword focus was also apparent, and a well thought out 'Star Baker' initiative is supporting the unpacking of success criteria linked to practical food studies. This is all very good.
- In light of all the positives identified, it is recommended that opportunities for in-class practice sharing be explored as teachers have much to garner from each other and their highly effective approaches to teaching and learning.

### 2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of provision and support for Home Economics is satisfactory overall, with a number of positive aspects identified.

- Home Economics is a popular optional subject. Uptake levels are very high, and boys are well represented across all year groups. As a result, the subject has a high profile.
- Access to the subject is very good in Junior Cycle, supported by a short, subject sampling programme in first year and the construction of student-informed, subject blocks.
- Both teachers are suitably qualified and are supported to upskill on a continuous basis. The vision for deployment of teachers will seek to ensure that, going forward, responsibility for year groups is more evenly shared.
- The subject is well resourced. Work to enhance the cleaning of the two specialist rooms is being addressed by management. The subject-specific health and safety statement requires annual review.
- Management's innovation in the construction of the first-year timetable up to midterm is creditable, as it seeks to ensure that suitably qualified teachers can be deployed to teach Home Economics should the number of students choosing to study the subject require the formation of two or more class groups.
- Currently, only students who studied Home Economics in Junior Cycle can study it in TY. This decision should be revisited as part of the annual review of the TY programme.
- The junior cycle home economics specification has been designed for a minimum of 200 hours of timetabled student engagement across the three years of junior cycle. Currently, there is a shortfall of twelve hours, which is equivalent to six weeks of student engagement. The same is true for all junior cycle option subjects offered in the school. This should be addressed as a matter of priority.
- It is positive that due consideration has been given by management to seeking to ensure that lessons are spread across the week.
- A one-hour lesson is a challenge for the delivery of practical food studies. In order to help teachers ensure optimum learning, management is timetabling Home Economics up to breaktimes, lunchtimes and the end of the day. The sustainability of the approach, as well as the possible impact that it may have on future uptake levels, needs further consideration. It is recommended that other solutions be explored.

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

- The planning work of the subject department is of a very high quality. This is influenced by: high levels of commitment; an emerging spirit of cooperation in response to the recent development from a one-teacher to a two-teacher department; a shared appreciation for the value of reflection; and adaptability, coupled with a solution-focused outlook.
- A comprehensive subject plan exists, and it is positive that teachers understand and appreciate the 'work-in-progress' nature of the plan. A subject co-ordinator has overall responsibility for planning, but it is clear that in this newly-established, two-teacher department that a team approach exists.
- The quality of programme planning is very good, both for junior cycle and for TY. Planning of units of learning at Junior Cycle is informed by Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) templates and much progress is evident. The attention paid to both ongoing and summative, unit-specific, assessment strategies is particularly commended. A life-skills focus in TY is supporting innovation in programme design, with students' needs and wishes informing teachers' identification of aspects for exploration. This attention to student voice is highly praised.
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is very effectively used to support collaborative planning and the sharing of ideas, approaches and resources, both between the two teachers in the department and a teacher in a neighbouring school. This level of

networking is particularly applauded and will prove valuable as teachers work to embed the new junior cycle specification.

- Since the department's inception in 2016, planning for the establishment of a calendar of valuable, yet fun, co-curricular events is ongoing. In addition, and with a view to fostering levels of partnership with parents, the subject department has organised cookery demonstrations for parents. Teachers are commended for their initiative and work.
- The quality of planning and preparation for observed lessons was very good overall and, at times, outstanding. This included very good planning in response to the school's current focus in school self-evaluation (SSE).
- Other commendable planning work being undertaken includes: planning for enhanced in-class questioning; sustainability-conscious planning, both in the department and in the classroom; and review informed planning. The latter would benefit from the compilation of summary documents linked to action plans.

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

# **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 Edmund Rice College welcomes the findings of the recent home economics subject inspection.

The board is pleased to note the positive findings of the inspector in relation to quality of teaching and learning; the highly informed, confident and enthusiastic disposition of the teachers; the high levels of curiosity and eagerness of the students; the highly student-centred approach in lessons; and the high quality of the planning work of the subject department.

The board is particularly pleased to note the inspector's finding that "Students are being supported to truly flourish, both as learners and human beings".

## **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 members of the Home Economics department have begun to explore opportunities for sharing in-class practices, as well as their highly effective approaches to teaching and learning.

The Transition Year programme is being offered in the school for the very first time this year and will be reviewed in advance of the next school year.

The board is aware of the required minimum hours of timetabled student engagement in all optional subjects offered by the school and several timetabling options have been explored but the provision of the mandatory hours of wellbeing over the 3 year programme has reduced the number of timetabled hours available for other subjects. Notwithstanding this, the board is pleased to note the inspector's findings that "access to the subject is very good in Junior Cycle", and "management's innovation in the construction of the first-year timetable up to midterm is creditable, as it seeks to ensure that suitably qualified teachers can be deployed to teach Home Economics, should the number of students choosing to study the subject require the formation of two or more class groups".

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 the board recognises the impact it has on food-studies lessons. The board would welcome advice in relation to timetabling such lessons and will ensure that the Home Economics department continues to be supported, particularly with regard to the planning and execution of practical food-studies lessons.