

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Home Economics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Fingal Community College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Seatown Road Swords County Dublin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	70121H

Date of Inspection: 17-11-2016



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.

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.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	17-11-2016
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 seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to the senior management and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Fingal Community College is a co-educational school under the auspices of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). The school has a current population of 707 students. Home Economics is provided as an optional subject at Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate levels. A home economics module forms part of the Transition Year (TY) programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in the lessons observed; some very effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) was noted.
- Some exemplary practice is evident in supporting students to achieve very high levels of proficiency in a wide range of practical and procedural skills.
- Students enjoy their learning in Home Economics; there is scope enhance planning for differentiation and supporting oral skills in lessons.
- An exemplary range of co-curricular activities is provided though Home Economics.
- The subject benefits from a very good level of whole-school support; one specialist room needs attention.
- Very good progress has been made in implementing the recommendations from a previous inspection of Home Economics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Further attention should be given to planning differentiated learning opportunities and to incorporating strategies that enable students to articulate and apply their learning in lessons.
- The home economics team should develop formative assessment approaches that engage students in using the formative feedback provided and encourage them to actively reflect on their progress as learners.
- The range of summative assessment modes used in junior cycle should be extended to provide for an assessment of the relevant practical coursework component.
- School management, in association with DDLETB, should address the maintenance issues noted in the textiles room, as a matter of priority.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in the lessons observed. Some exemplary practice was noted in supporting students to achieve very high levels of proficiency in a wide range of practical and procedural skills.
- A very good rapport was evident in all lessons. Students' efforts were affirmed and, overall, they were able to work independently and in groups.
- All lessons were well planned. The content chosen built on previous learning and, where relevant, integrated related elements and processes. Some very good integration of relevant numeracy concepts was noted. Teachers' explanations were clear and accurate. ICT was well used to provide high-quality visual stimuli.
- Some good differentiated teaching approaches were used, especially in the practical lessons. In some lessons, there was scope to adjust the pace or pitch of learning activities to support the inclusion of all students. All lessons should provide for a range of differentiated learning opportunities that are tailored to meet students' individual needs and optimise learners' engagement.
- Teachers made deliberate efforts to facilitate active learning and a good range of methodologies was deployed in lessons. However, further consideration should be given to how students are facilitated to process and apply their learning in lessons. On occasion, there was an over-reliance on teacher input or there was insufficient processing of student-led tasks. It is recommended that strategies that enable students to clearly articulate, process and apply their learning be integrated into all lessons.
- A highly commendable focus is placed on developing students' creativity in the preparation and presentation of dishes. Overall, students demonstrated a very high standard of organisational and food preparation skills, and made judicious use of ICT to record their learning. Some very good use was made of spot demonstrations to model key food preparation processes and to integrate relevant theoretical information. Optimum use should be made of this strategy.
- The range of cookery resource booklets developed by the home economics team is proving particularly effective in supporting learner autonomy and in developing students' evaluation skills. The design of some of the evaluation sheets could be re-considered to prompt even deeper levels of learner reflection.
- Overall, students enjoy their learning in Home Economics. Observation of practical coursework in the areas of textiles, craft and design indicates very high levels of creativity, practical and procedural skills. The success criteria used to support the completion of the design-brief folders facilitate reflective practice among learners. These practices are illustrative of the teachers' focus on supporting the key junior-cycle skills: *Being Creative* and *Managing Myself*.
- Student notebooks are well organised. Written tasks and tests are assigned and monitored regularly. There is scope to extend the formative assessment practices used to optimise learning. The feedback provided should affirm progress and provide students with a clear pathway for improvement. Strategies that engage students in using the formative feedback provided should also be considered.
- Written examinations predominate as a summative assessment strategy. The range of summative assessment modes should be extended to provide for an assessment of the

relevant practical coursework component. This will enable students to see the inter-relationship that exists between each assessment component.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Home Economics benefits from a very good level of provision and whole-school support.
- The home economics team comprises two very committed and enthusiastic subject specialists. Members are strongly committed to continuing professional development (CPD).
- The exemplary range of co-curricular activities enables participating students to make connections with other subjects, and apply their learning to contexts outside of the classroom.
- Both kitchens are well resourced, highly organised and developed as stimulating learning environments. The textiles room needs development; some significant maintenance issues were noted that need the urgent attention of DDLETB. School management, in association with the DDLETB, should address the health and safety issues noted, as a matter of priority, to enable the room be developed into a vibrant learning space.
- Very good health and safety routines were evident in all lessons, but aspects of the formal policy need development. The risk assessment templates for Home Economics should be developed to include the full range of activities undertaken in lessons and an annual risk assessment of each specialist room and its equipment should be conducted.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning and preparation are very good. The quality of teachers' collaborative practice is a significant strength and provides for quality learning. Common programmes of work are in place and their implementation is supported by common approaches to teaching, and assessing aspects of students' learning.
- The home economics team is reflective and proactive in their approach to planning for teaching and learning. Recommendations from a previous subject inspection of Home Economics have been well implemented.
- Deliberate efforts are made to encourage uptake of higher level in the certificate examinations. Data from the examinations is examined regularly. The subject team should use the outcomes of this analysis to devise an action plan that identifies specific teaching and learning priorities and targets for the next phase of subject department planning.
- The programme plans illustrate many aspects of highly effective practice; further attention needs to be given to planning for differentiation. Particular attention should be given to providing for differentiated activities that support the active engagement of all students.
- It is highly commendable that the teaching team has begun to reflect on how the relevant key skills from the Framework for Junior Cycle can be supported through Home Economics.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and home economics 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 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. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. 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;