

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Home Economics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Mac Dara's Community College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Wellington Lane Templeogue Dublin 6W
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	70260V

Date of Inspection: 02-12-2016

Date of issue of report: 02-02-2017



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.

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.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date(s) of inspection	1 & 2 December 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 eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Mac Dara's Community College is a co-educational school under the auspices of the Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). The school has 865 students. The school offers a broad range of curricular programmes. Home Economics is provided as an optional subject at Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate levels. A home economics module is also provided in Transition Year (TY).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in the lessons observed; some exemplary practice was noted.
- The implementation of agreed strategies for integrating the design brief process is supporting high-quality learner outcomes.
- Students made good progress in lessons; there was scope to extend strategies to consolidate learning.
- A highly commendable range of co-curricular activities supports student learning.
- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good; specialist rooms are well resourced and maintained as vibrant learning environments.
- The overall quality of subject planning and preparation is good; there is scope to collectively agree additional teaching strategies to advance students' learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The home economics department should extend and share good practice in teaching strategies that enable students to summarise, consolidate and reflect on their learning.
- The range of junior-cycle assessment modes should be extended to provide for reporting of an aggregated mark that includes an assessment of relevant practical coursework.
- Strategies to improve the uptake of Home Economics should be explored.
- Teachers should use the common programme plans as working documents to inform on-going planning for teaching and learning in Home Economics.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in the lessons observed.
- All lessons were well prepared. Some exemplary practice was evident in the advance preparation of resources such as recipe flow charts, evaluation sheets and graphic organisers that were tailored to match the specific learning intentions of lessons and facilitated the purposeful engagement of students.
- Clear learning intentions were shared from the outset of lessons. Best practice was apparent in instances where students discussed the intentions and considered what they needed to learn. This practice is encouraged to enable students to reflect on their progress.
- A very good student-teacher rapport was evident in all lessons; students completed tasks in a productive manner and their efforts were affirmed and encouraged.
- A good range of teaching approaches was noted in lessons. Teacher explanations were clear and very good use was made of visual stimuli.
- Deliberate efforts were made to facilitate active learning, with some very good practices noted. Worksheets, graphic organisers and “show-me” boards proved particularly effective in supporting learning. In some instances there was insufficient consolidation of learning from some student activities. Strategies that enable students to clearly articulate, process and apply their learning should be integrated into all lessons.
- Very good procedural routines were evident in practical lessons and students demonstrated a good range of practical culinary skills. Some very good use was made of spot demonstrations to support learning. Optimum use should be made of this strategy to refine students’ culinary skills by modelling best practice as well as providing additional formative assessment opportunities.
- Homework is routinely assigned and high-quality formative feedback was noted in students’ copybooks. Strategies that engage students in using this formative feedback should be considered. There is scope to extend the range of written activities assigned to support students in processing and summarising information and deepen learning from lessons.
- Observation of practical coursework in the areas of textiles, craft and design indicates very high levels of creativity, practical and procedural skills.
- Good summative assessment practice is evident, but there is scope to review the basis for the mark awarded on some student reports. The final grade should be based on an aggregated mark that includes an assessment of the relevant practical coursework component.
- In light of the comments above, the home economics teachers should extend and share good pedagogic practice in strategies that enable students to summarise, consolidate and reflect on their learning.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of provision and whole-school support for Home Economics is very good. Students have good access to the subject and option bands are determined by students’ choices.

- The first-year taster programme supports students in making informed subject choices. Given the timetable requirements for the *Junior Cycle Framework*, consideration could be given to shortening the length of the taster programme. This would reduce the impact of the programme on the tuition time available to first-year students of Home Economics.
- There is scope to explore strategies for improving uptake of the subject, particularly at Leaving Certificate level. The home economics team, in consultation with management, should explore strategies that would make Home Economics a realistic option for a wider cohort of students.
- Senior management actively promotes a culture of continuous improvement in teaching and learning; a very good level of engagement with continuing professional development (CPD) is evident. This is impacting positively on the quality of students' learning experiences in Home Economics.
- The specialist rooms are well resourced and maintained as vibrant learning environments. Displays of student work promote high expectations for student achievement. A highly commendable range of co-curricular activities supports students' learning and engagement in Home Economics.
- Very good health and safety routines were evident in all lessons. Risk assessments have been devised and audits are conducted in accordance with whole-school procedures. It was noted that risk assessments, specific to the home economics rooms, are not included in the whole-school health and safety statement; this should be addressed.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of subject planning is good, with some very effective implementation of agreed teaching approaches.
- Subject team meetings are routinely scheduled. To make best use of this time, the meetings should be scheduled in a manner that facilitates the full attendance of the team.
- Teachers have worked effectively together to support some key aspects of students' learning. The staged approach agreed for the integration of the design brief process has resulted in very successful learner experiences and outcomes.
- There is scope for teachers to collectively develop and implement additional agreed teaching approaches. Student outcomes in the state examinations are reflected on annually by the subject department. This analysis forms part of the agenda agreed for the subject planning meeting each September. In addition, it would be useful for the team to review trends in student outcomes over a three or four year period, and record the analysis in the subject plan. This analysis could inform any further actions needed to support continued improvement in student learning.
- In accordance with the school's self-evaluation priorities, key literacy and numeracy strategies are implemented in lessons. The success of these strategies should be now be reviewed.
- While common outline programme plans are in place, individual teachers have also developed plans and these are at varying stages of development. Some exemplary individual teacher planning practice was apparent, particularly in the further development of learning outcomes and specific teaching approaches. This collective expertise should inform the further development of the common plans.

- Teachers should use the common plans as working documents and note the amendments made to learning outcomes, lesson sequence and record the teaching strategies that proved particularly effective. The consequential common plans with enhanced detail should provide for learning experiences that are of a consistently high quality.

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.

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 welcomes the main findings of the report and will use its recommendations to guide the development of Home Economics in the school.

The Board of Management wishes to express its appreciation for the dedication and hard work of the members of the Home Economics department in their promotion of teaching and learning within the subject area. It welcomes that the report acknowledges the following: the very good student-teacher rapport, the good range of teaching methodologies, the promotion of active learning methodologies and the very good procedural routines.

The Board of Management welcomes the recognition of the commitment of the school's management to providing well-resourced rooms, to supporting the Home Economics department and to promoting a culture of continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

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 Board of Management welcomes the recommendations of the report and notes the following which will be addressed: a) strategies to improve the uptake of Home Economics, b) developing opportunities for the members of the department to share and extend the good practice already in existence, c) developing opportunities to use trends in student outcomes in state examination for analysis and review.

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. 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;