

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Home Economics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Skerries Community College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Skerries Co. Dublin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	76078Q

Date of Inspection: 14-11-2018



**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	13 and 14 November 2018
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 six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Skerries Community College is a co-educational school under the auspices of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). Home Economics is provided as an optional subject at junior cycle and Leaving Certificate levels. The subject is a core component of the Transition Year (TY) programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good, with some very good practice evident.
- There was scope in some lessons to enhance the depth of students' learning and reflection through more strategic use of some teaching approaches.
- Very good assessment practice is apparent; some formative assessment strategies could be further developed.
- Students enjoy their learning in Home Economics and are encouraged to realise their potential; a commendable range of co-curricular activities is provided.
- Subject provision and whole-school support for Home Economics is very good; a culture of promoting on-going improvement and innovation in learning is evident.
- Teachers' collaborative planning in Home Economics is of a very high standard; effective self-evaluation processes are evolving.

Recommendations

- Optimum use should be made of spot demonstrations to refine students' food practical skills.
- Agreed procedures that support students to record and reflect on their learning from practical lessons should be implemented; and additional opportunities should be provided for them to apply the Design Brief Process in lessons.
- Success criteria should be developed to support the summative assessment of students' practical coursework.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good, with some very good practice noted. On occasion there was scope to provide for deeper learning and student reflection.
- A very good rapport was evident in all lessons; students were confident to ask and answer questions, and risk incorrect responses. In each lesson the class teacher's own enthusiasm for the subject motivated students to enjoy their learning.
- All lessons were well prepared, with some very good use of visual and tactile resources to enhance teaching and learning. Some good development work in the use of digital media is on-going.
- In all lessons well-phrased learning intentions were shared with students. This provided for effective outcomes as students were clearly focused. On occasion, too many learning intentions were planned for the lesson and this impacted on the depth of students' learning. To provide for highly-effective learning, the range of learning intentions and teaching approaches chosen should support incremental and integrated learning. The formative assessment practices deployed should also enable students to actively reflect on their progress.
- In theoretical lessons some very good use was made of teaching approaches such as know-want-learned (KWL), think-pair-share, show-me boards and mind maps to support a student-centred approach to learning. On occasion, there was an over-reliance on teacher input or there was insufficient processing of student-led tasks. Strategies that enable students to clearly articulate, process and apply their learning should be integrated into all lessons.
- As standard classroom practice students work on their own in practical food studies lessons. This commendable practice can support learner autonomy. However, careful consideration should be given to the age and stage of learners when planning independent cooking opportunities. While students displayed high levels of organisational skills in the practical food studies lessons observed, due to the high level of activity in the kitchen, students did not have adequate opportunity to refine their food and culinary skills. There was also insufficient time for students to record or reflect on their learning. Sufficient time should be available in food studies practicals to ensure that optimum use is made of spot demonstrations to develop and refine students' food preparation and cooking skills, and to allow them to evaluate their learning in the lesson.
- Students are exposed to a very good range of craft and textiles skills. A highly-effective approach to supporting the incremental development of practical textile skills was noted in a textiles lesson observed.
- Students' design folders indicated that some learners are finding engagement with the design brief process challenging. Given that the design brief process is an integral part of learning in Home Economics, agreed procedures that support learners to routinely record their learning from practical lessons should be implemented. Teachers should agree and integrate an incremental approach in the utilisation of the design brief process to advance the development skills in the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of information.
- A good range of formative assessment strategies was used in lessons. Some high quality formative feedback was noted in student copybooks. Exemplary practice was noted when students used the formative feedback provided in copies and on their tests to inform their learning.

- Very good summative assessment practice is evident. Recommendations from a previous subject inspection informs the format of examinations. A significant strength is that students' progress in practical coursework is assessed and reported on. As a next step success criteria should be agreed for each of the practical coursework assessments. These criteria should be aligned to the knowledge, procedural and practical skills being assessed and be used to inform the subsequent feedback provided to students.
- Students enjoy Home Economics and teachers have high expectation for students' achievement. Deliberate efforts are made to encourage uptake of higher level in the certificate examinations.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole-school support for Home Economics is very good. Timetabling arrangements are appropriate in almost all instances, with a good spread of lessons across the week. School management, in an effort to address the increasing demand for the subject, has strategically appointed additional subject specialists.
- The commendable range of planned co-curricular activities in Home Economics maintains a positive profile for the subject and enables participating students to apply their learning to contexts outside of the classroom.
- All students have very good access to Home Economics. Option bands are generated based on students' preferences.
- School management actively promotes a culture of on-going improvement and innovation in teaching and learning. The home economics team displays a high level of commitment and enthusiasm for the subject. Members are actively involved in the school's digital strategy and school self-evaluation (SSE) committees. Such initiatives support on-going innovation in supporting learning in Home Economics.
- There are three specialist rooms; two kitchens and one textiles room. The specialist rooms are well resourced and maintained as vibrant learning environments. Some maintenance and housekeeping issues were noted in one specialist room. The risk assessment procedures currently implemented should inform an annual maintenance/housekeeping schedule for each room. Given the increased numbers of students and teachers now sharing the specialist facilities it would be worthwhile for the teachers to agree housekeeping procedures for all students using these learning environments.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of teachers' collaborative and reflective practice is very good. A shared electronic platform is being used very effectively to share resources and share expertise in planning for lessons.
- There is a clear connection between subject-department planning and whole-school priorities. An improvement plan that supports literacy and numeracy was developed for Home Economics. A significant strength of this process was that the team identified opportunities where students' literacy and numeracy could be developed as an integral part of routine learning experiences in Home Economics. The success of implementation of agreed approaches needs to be monitored.
- While student outcomes in the Leaving Certificate examinations are analysed annually, there is scope to examine a wider range of data to identify trends in student attainment. The

subject team should use the findings of this analysis and reflections on classroom practice to identify the next set of priorities. An action plan, which identifies specific teaching and learning approaches, and a timeframes for review, should be developed.

- Programme planning is well underway. Very good progress is being made in planning for the recently-introduced Junior Cycle Home Economics specification.
- There is scope to further develop some other programme plans by incorporating specific learning outcomes and teaching approaches for topics, and by adjusting the lesson sequence to support a more integrated approach to learning. Teachers should use their working copies of programme plans to progress this work.

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
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;