

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Home Economics

REPORT

School name	Abbey Community College
School address	Abbey Road Ferrybank Waterford
Roll number	76082H

Date of Inspection: 11-02-2020



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	10-02-2020, 11-02-2020
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principals and home economics teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 4 lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principals and home economics teachers

School context

Abbey Community College is a co-educational school under the trusteeship of Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB) and the Sisters of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary. The school has a current enrolment of 931 students. In addition to the Junior Cycle, the school provides the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and an optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good; lessons ranged from good to very good; limited use of approaches to support the differing needs of learners were evident.
- Teachers created very warm and welcoming learning environments for students and this supported positive student engagement in learning.
- Limited use of written formative feedback was evident on students' work.
- The quality of whole-school support and subject provision for Home Economics is very good; a culture of ongoing improvement in managing the organisation and leading learning is evident.
- Home Economics is a very popular subject in the school and uptake of the subject is very high; a dedicated subject department actively promotes the subject.
- The overall quality of collaborative practice is very good, nevertheless, too many learning outcomes are incorporated in junior cycle units of learning.

Recommendations

- Teachers should maximise the use of differentiation strategies in lessons to ensure all students are appropriately supported and challenged.
- Written formative feedback should be regularly provided by teachers on students' work.
- Teachers should reduce the number of learning outcomes planned for in some junior cycle units of work.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good: lessons ranged from good to very good.
- A very good rapport was evident between teachers and their students. Teachers set high expectations for their students, supported and encouraged students in lessons by reassuring them that making mistakes is part of the learning process.
- In all lessons, teachers shared learning intentions with students. In some instances, the phrasing of learning intentions needed adjusting so that the intended learning was shared in terms of what students should know, understand and be able to do by the end of a lesson. Best practice was evident when teachers revisited learning intentions and assessed students' attainment of the intended learning during the lesson. This very good practice supported students in reflecting on their learning and informed the teacher of the progress students were making.
- In some lessons, too many learning intentions were planned for, or the challenge of the practical task set was very complex given the age and stage of learners, and the time available. When designing lessons, further consideration should be given to the number of learning intentions planned for, and the age and stage of learners to maximise the learning from the tasks undertaken.
- Very good practice was evident when teachers cogenerated success criteria with students in lessons and when these were aligned to the learning intentions of the lesson.
- In practical food studies lessons, teachers made appropriate use of spot demonstrations which were of a very high quality.
- Students diligently applied hygiene and safety practices in food practical lessons and they could explain the principles underlying the importance of implementing these practices. In some lessons, there was scope for students to further develop their organisational skills to support them in managing their work stations efficiently.
- In some lessons, some differentiation techniques were employed such as providing recipe handouts which outlined the key stages of the recipe using text and accompanying images depicting the instructions. This resource supported students to sequence tasks and to undertake practical skills independently. To further support and challenge students, additional differentiation techniques such as differentiated content, worksheets, activities and questions should be incorporated in lessons as appropriate.
- In most lessons, students were active in their learning and this resulted in very high levels of engagement and motivation. In some lessons, further opportunities should be created for student activities.
- In some lessons, a good balance was achieved between teacher directed questions and the use of global questions. However, in many instances there was an overreliance on the use of global questioning and this limited some students' engagement in making oral contributions in lessons.
- While eager to answer questions, some students tended to respond to questions using one-word answers. Teachers should further encourage and support students to develop their oral literacy skills and develop full sentences in the answering of oral questions. This approach will also support students to extend and develop their written answers.

- In all practical lessons, teachers made deliberate efforts to link relevant theory with the practical work being undertaken.
- Generally, very good routines were evident in students' copybooks. Some examples of students making notes and mind maps were viewed in copybooks. This very good practice should be extended to support students to take more ownership of their learning.
- There was some evidence of students self-assessing their work using marking schemes. Very good practice was evident when students noted corrections on their work in addition to marking their work. All teachers should create opportunities for students to self-assess their work.
- In all lessons, homework was assigned, and regular recording of homework was evident in homework journals. A variation in the quality of feedback provided by teachers on students' written work was observed. In some instances, high quality written formative feedback was provided which clearly indicated strengths and areas for development of students' work. This practice should be adopted by all teachers.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of whole-school support and subject provision for Home Economics is very good.
- Home Economics is a very popular subject in the school and uptake levels are very high at junior and senior cycle.
- Leaving Certificate Applied will be available to students in the school as an option from September 2020, and given the popularity of Home Economics in the school, it is judicious to include Hotel Catering and Tourism as part of this new programme.
- Subject option bands are generated based on students' preferences at junior and senior cycle, and this is good practice.
- It is very good practice that individual teachers meet the principal on an annual basis to discuss what is working well and their continuing professional development (CPD) needs. In the spirit of identifying areas for ongoing improvement in the area of subject provision and resourcing, the subject convener meets with a delegated deputy principal to discuss other matters, including timetabling and resourcing requests.
- Senior management develops staff capacity by providing opportunities for all teachers to teach junior and senior cycle Home Economics.
- There is an up-to-date health and safety statement in place. Risk assessment templates have been created for the home economics classrooms. It is very good practice that teachers complete the risk assessment templates on a monthly basis and share these with senior management. In some instances, the kitchens are used to undertake textiles work. The dual-purpose nature of the kitchen and the relevant constraints that this entails should be reflected in the risk assessment.
- Professional Master of Education (PME) students are welcomed and very well supported by senior management and teachers.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of collaborative practice is very good. The home economics teachers are a committed and reflective team. Teachers share their resources and expertise to enhance learner experiences and outcomes.
- Commendably, teachers have reflected on the school improvement plan and have devised and implemented strategies to address identified areas for development, including homework practices and student voice. In time, the effectiveness of these strategies could be measured to see if they are positively enhancing learner experiences and outcomes in Home Economics as intended.
- Teachers in the subject department have outlined their vision for Home Economics over the next five years. To support the realisation of the agreed vision, teachers should collectively create a time-bound action plan, which is inclusive of target dates, assigned roles and review mechanisms.
- Very high levels of teacher engagement in CPD have been recorded in the subject plan, and it is commendable that teachers attend a range of events that support their practice.
- Teachers plan a variety of activities and trips to promote the subject; including a school bake-off competition which welcomes student and staff participants, visits to local food festivals and to the 'Grow It Yourself' headquarters in Waterford.
- Junior cycle planning is progressing well overall. However, in some units of work, too many learning outcomes are planned. The number of learning outcomes planned should be reduced to allow sufficient time for students to engage meaningfully with the learning process.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principals 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;