

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Home Economics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Magh Ene College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Church Road Bundoran County Donegal
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	76083J

Date of Inspection: 09-05-2017



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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	08-05-2017 & 09-05-2017
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 three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Magh Ene College, is a co-educational school under the auspices of Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB). The school provides the Junior Certificate programme, the Leaving Certificate programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. Home Economics is an optional subject at junior and senior cycle, and is a core component of TY.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was very good.
- A very good range of teaching approaches supported active learning in all lessons.
- The range of formative assessment strategies needs to be extended to complement the commendable focus placed on facilitating students' higher-order thinking.
- Home Economics benefits from a very good level of whole-school support; uptake of Leaving Certificate Home Economics needs close monitoring.
- Senior management promotes a culture of continuous improvement in teaching and learning.
- The quality of collaborative planning is very good; some aspects of programme plans need further development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Additional peer and self-assessment strategies should be incorporated into lessons.
- An action plan should be developed by the subject team to support the next phase of planning for teaching and learning.
- A programme plan for Leaving Certificate Home Economics should be developed which clearly builds on students' prior knowledge and supports incremental learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good. The range of teaching approaches chosen provided for very good levels of differentiation.
- Learning intentions were well phrased and built on students' prior knowledge. Care should be taken to allow sufficient time to revisit the planned intentions to consolidate learning.
- Planned learning activities were well managed; the range of teaching approaches used supported active learning. High-quality visuals clarified concepts and supported very high quality learning.
- Relevant numeracy concepts were seamlessly integrated into lessons. While a good emphasis was placed on subject-specific terminology, it is an opportune time for the home economics team to review the success of implementation of agreed literacy strategies.
- Students were supported to develop a very high standard of practical and procedural skills in lessons. Spot demonstrations were used to very good effect to model key skills. It is very good practice that students record the various stages of the design brief process in tandem with the production of the craft item. There is scope to incorporate the various stages of the design brief process, including written evaluations, into practical food studies lessons on a more regular basis.
- Observation of practical coursework in the areas of textiles, craft and design indicated some very good practical skills. Exemplary practice was apparent where students demonstrated high levels of creativity and complexity of skills in making their chosen item.
- Critical thinking was encouraged actively through well-planned lesson tasks; further use of higher-order questions, with increased wait time, is recommended to encourage students to provide detailed answers.
- In a number of lessons, students could have been challenged further to reflect on and evaluate their learning. It is recommended that a range of additional strategies to facilitate in peer and self-assessment be integrated into lessons.
- Homework is assigned regularly and some good use of formative feedback was evident in copybooks. Some exemplary use of concept maps supported students in analysing and synthesising information. To complement the commendable focus placed on higher-order thinking skills, further consideration should be given to the range of homework tasks assigned.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and support for Home Economics is very good.
- The short subject-sampling programme in first year and the arrangement of TY modules assist students to make informed subject choices.
- While uptake of junior-cycle Home Economics is good, Leaving Certificate Home Economics has not been provided for the last two years due to insufficient student demand. Deliberative efforts have been made to promote the subject and a large number of incoming fifth-year students have chosen Home Economics. The home economics team is commended for its

efforts in re-establishing Leaving Certificate Home Economics, and should closely monitor trends to ensure that the subject remains a viable option in the senior cycle.

- Senior management promotes a culture of continuous improvement in teaching and learning. The home economics teachers have engaged with a wide range of continuing professional development (CPD) and other subject-related activities. The experience gained is impacting positively on the quality of students' learning in lessons.
- There has been considerable movement in the staffing of the subject department in recent times; very good procedures support transitions to facilitate continuity in student learning.
- The specialist room is well maintained. Systematic procedures are in place to manage health and safety. The risk-assessment templates should be extended to take full account of the multi-functional nature of the room. Additional safety notices, particularly to support practical textiles lessons, should also be displayed.
- Very good procedures have been established at ETB-level to facilitate collaborative planning among subject teachers from different schools. This forum should prove very useful for sharing ideas for integrating the key skills of junior cycle into lessons, and to assist with preliminary planning for the introduction of the new specification for Home Economics.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Teachers' collaborative planning and preparation are very effective.
- The home economics department is well organised with some highly effective reflective practice apparent. There is good alignment between the school self-evaluation (SSE) themes and planning at subject-department level.
- It is now an opportune time to formally review the success of implementation of the SSE strategies, and the teaching and learning approaches agreed at subject-department level. Using the outcomes of the analysis of attainment trends and individual teacher reflections, the home economics team should develop an action plan to embed the highly effective strategies noted and address the next priorities for teaching and learning in the subject.
- Individual teachers have further developed their own programme plans. This collective expertise should be used to further develop the Junior Certificate plan to include learning intentions and incorporate additional opportunities to integrate the design brief process in food studies.
- While the home economics plan for TY incorporates a valuable range of learning experiences, assessment criteria should be developed for each of the planned modes of assessment. These criteria should inform peer and self-assessment strategies and provide the basis for quality feedback on completed work.
- To complement the re-introduction of Leaving Certificate Home Economics and retain the subject as a viable senior cycle option, a detailed programme plan needs to be developed that clearly builds on students' prior knowledge and supports incremental learning.

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.

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;