Subject Inspection in Home Economics

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Boherbue Comprehensive School</th>
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<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Boherbue</td>
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<td>Mallow</td>
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<td>Co Cork</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
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Date of Inspection: 12 May 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.
Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>12-05-2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examination of students’ work</td>
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<td>Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teacher</td>
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<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
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<td>• Discussion with principal and teacher</td>
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<td>• Interaction with students</td>
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SCHOOL CONTEXT

Boherbue Comprehensive School is a co-educational, post-primary school under the patronage of the Diocese of Kerry. 320 students are currently enrolled. Students are offered the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). One teacher teaches all home economics lessons in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

• While significant time was devoted to preparing for observed lessons, particularly in relation to resource provision, planning and preparation for the teaching of home economics is in need of significant development.
• Valuable electronic presentations informed lessons, but the manner in which they were used resulted in a predominantly didactic approach to lesson delivery.
• Provision and whole-school support for Home Economics, including timetabling, access to the subject and resourcing, is very good.
• An instructional leadership programme was completed recently by the home economics teacher.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• With regard to planning, further consideration needs to be given to the impact of all planned inputs on student learning, and on designing lessons that support greater and more varied student participation.
• The preparation of outline programmes of work should be prioritised and, in time, more detailed programmes of work should be developed in line with the advice provided in the report.
• Teacher inputs should be punctuated regularly with carefully planned, meaningful student tasks designed to promote understanding and learning.
• The theory, skills, tactics and strategies explored during the recently completed instructional leadership programme should be applied in a systematic way to the teaching of Home Economics in the school.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- While there were some strengths in the lessons observed during the evaluation, there was much scope for development in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The key observable strength was the significant time devoted to preparing for lessons. However, more consideration should be given to planning lessons that support greater and more varied student participation, and which provide for a variety of learning styles.
- It is positive that the plan for the lesson was shared with students. However, it is recommended that this sharing would make explicit reference to student activity and learning, emphasising the knowledge to be garnered and skills to be developed during the lesson, rather than content to be covered.
- Considerable time was devoted to checking levels of students’ understanding and learning of subject matter explored in preceding lessons. It is important, however, that students are instructed to close their books and copybooks in advance of related questioning.
- The teacher was conscious of the need to include students but, to this end, there was an overreliance on the strategy of questioning.
- Valuable electronic presentations had been prepared to inform lessons, but the manner in which they were used resulted in a predominantly didactic approach to lesson delivery. It is recommended that teacher inputs be punctuated regularly with carefully planned, meaningful, student activities, designed to promote understanding and learning. While there was some evidence of this in one of the lessons observed, the activities were not well placed in the lesson.
- The amount of class time being spent on both the junior cycle design and craft project and the senior cycle food journal is of concern. This should be addressed as part of the development of up-to-date programmes of work.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision and whole-school support for Home Economics is very good.
- Access to the subject is favourable, supported by provision for subject sampling, as well as a student-friendly approach to subject choice.
- Current timetabling of the subject is in line with syllabus recommendations. Management envisages that there may be need in the near future to co-timetable Home Economics for fifth-year and sixth-year class groups. If this becomes a reality, it would be important to consider how the exploration of the Leaving Certificate food studies assignments can be accommodated, as intended, for fifth-year students. In addition, it would also be necessary to ensure that sixth-year students have sufficient contact time to engage with other aspects of the syllabus.
- Home Economics is very well resourced, with two suitably equipped and well-maintained specialist rooms, namely a kitchen and a textiles room.
- The subject-specific health and safety statement should be updated on an annual basis. It is important that it reflects the hazard analysis, risk assessment approach espoused in the Guidelines on Managing Health and Safety in Post-Primary Schools, published by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) in conjunction with other agencies.
- Management is highly supportive and very encouraging of teachers’ continuing professional development (CPD), recently providing the home economics department with the opportunity to complete an instructional leadership programme. At this point, it is important that time is given, by the teacher, to assimilating the theory, skills, tactics and strategies explored during this training. Related learning should be applied, in a systematic manner, to the teaching of
Home Economics in the school. In addition, it is suggested that some peer observation could be valuable.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning and preparation is identified as an area in need of significant development.
- The starting point should be the programmes of work. To begin, outline programmes should be developed. These should: find their basis in a series of year-group specific learning outcomes; provide for an integrated exploration of theory and practical; demonstrate a developmental approach to the acquisition of knowledge and skills; and, as relevant, include explicit provision for the design brief approach. In time, more detailed programmes of work should be prepared. These should identify, on a topic-by-topic basis, the specific learning outcomes, resources, methodologies and assessment approaches employed.
- Specifically, in relation to the first-year and TY programmes of work, it would be valuable to consider revising the content with a view to fostering higher uptake levels in Home Economics in the school.
- It is recommended that a subject-specific assessment policy be prepared, which should detail the assessment approaches used in each year group to determine students’ progress and achievement in all examinable components of the relevant syllabuses.
- It is important that records are maintained of work undertaken during allocated, formal, subject-department, planning time.
- The subject plan should demonstrate reflection, review and evaluation. Time-bound action plans should be developed for all identified areas for improvement.
- While significant time was devoted to preparing for observed lessons, particularly in relation to resource provision, it is recommended that further consideration be given to the impact of all planned inputs on student learning.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teacher at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management 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.
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.

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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td><em>Very good</em> 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 <em>outstanding</em> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.</td>
<td>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</td>
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<td>Good</td>
<td><em>Good</em> 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 <em>very good</em> standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td><em>Satisfactory</em> 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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<td>Fair</td>
<td><em>Fair</em> 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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<td>Weak</td>
<td><em>Weak</em> 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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management acknowledges receipt of the Report on the Subject Inspection in Home Economics for Boherbue Comprehensive School.

Prior to the Home Economics Subject Inspection, the Board has requested a curricular concession of 10 hours to appoint a Home Economics teacher to lessen the workload of the existing Home Economics teacher. Having been granted this curricular concession, the Board is satisfied that the issues raised can be addressed.

Area 2  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The Home Economics Department has revisited and updated the subject plan and work programmes for each year group to ensure they are time specific, grounded in learning outcomes and are inclusive of collaborative learning methodologies and instructional leadership strategies.

The Home Economics Department will continue to work on the feedback from the inspector’s recommendations.