

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Home Economics**  
**REPORT**

**Midleton College**  
**Midleton, County Cork**  
**Roll number: 62370J**

**Date of inspection: 18 September 2015**



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF**  
**OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION**  
**AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

**REPORT  
ON  
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HOME ECONOMICS**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	17 and 18 September, 2015
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Home Economics is an extremely popular subject in the school and is very well provided for and supported.
- Subject department planning is well advanced, with reflection and review centrally positioned within this work.
- The quality of planning and preparation for lessons was very good.
- There was a strong teacher presence, and the self-assuredness and confidence observed was matched by capability.
- Teaching was of a high quality and there was evidence of student learning
- Practical food studies lessons were extremely well executed.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The subject department's identified annual aims, which arise out of reflection and review, should be strategised.
  - It is recommended that programmes of work be further developed or revised.
  - As relevant, the number of strategies used over the course of a lesson should be increased in order to vary the demands being placed on students.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Middleton College is a co-educational, fee-paying, secondary school with a current enrolment of 415 students. The school provides Junior Certificate, the Transition Year (TY) programme and Leaving Certificate to both boarding and day students.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Teaching was of a high quality and there was evidence of student learning
- Lessons were purposeful, informed by a clear set of aims and related learning intentions. A suggestion offered early in the evaluation, to move from a content focus to a learning focus when sharing learning intentions with students, was taken on board immediately.
- Significant efforts were made in lessons to link the new topic to students' prior learning or experiences.
- Integration was evident in both theory and practical lessons.
- Overall, the pitch, pace and structure of lessons was appropriate. The need to reconsider pitch at senior cycle was advised on one occasion.
- There was a strong teacher presence, and the self-assuredness and confidence observed was matched by capability. Teachers' inputs were highly informed, and the incorporation of visual resources was used to good effect to support teaching and promote understanding and learning.
- On the whole, a range of strategies was utilised, and this supported maximum student participation and involvement. On occasion it was suggested that the number of strategies used over the course of a lesson be increased in order to vary the demands on students.
- Questioning was a key strategy in all lessons. Much good practice was observed relating to distribution, wait time, prompting, encouraging and extending. Teachers were advised to discourage chorus answering.
- Opportunities for group work were provided in all lessons. Best practice was where the corresponding activity was closely aligned to the topic being explored in class; where roles were assigned; where clear instructions, including scope and parameters, were delineated; and where activities were time bound and fully processed. This good practice should be fully considered in teachers' future use of cooperative tasks.
- Some note taking was observed. Teachers are asked to question the value of requiring students to note down material that is not very different from that which is provided in textbooks. Simultaneously, there was some evidence of note-making. This is a strategy that should be further incorporated.
- Practical food studies lessons were extremely well executed. Thorough instruction was provided to students, which was highly focused on good practice, correct technique, hygiene, safety and resource management. Expectations of students in these classes have been well communicated and so students worked confidently and competently. Students' independence was promoted in numerous ways, including a board where students were required to note down the time their dish went into the oven and the time they expected it would be ready. The importance of using locally sourced produce, and the very local #12mile philosophy, was positively emphasised throughout lessons.

- There was an obvious learning ‘buzz’ in almost all lessons. Students demonstrated interest, focus and eagerness. Interactions were most positive.
- Novel approaches to recapitulation were observed in a number of lessons. This included a Tic-Tac-Toe activity with questions. This highly interactive model created an engaging and fun opportunity to review student learning.

#### **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Provision and support for Home Economics is very good. In addition, there is an appreciation for Home Economics that extends to the teaching staff as a whole.
- In general, Home Economics is offered as an optional subject, but a taster programme is provided in first year and a compulsory module in TY, both of which promote informed decision making around subject choice. In addition, an optional cookery module is also offered in TY.
- Home Economics is an extremely popular subject at junior cycle, with uptake levels exceeding national norms. Uptake in senior cycle is also strong. It is impressive that an almost equal number of girls and boys opt to study Home Economics.
- Timetabling is consistent with both best practice and syllabus requirements.
- Management’s deployment of teachers supports the principles of both continuity and rotation, and teachers’ participation in continuing professional development activities is supported.
- The home-economics kitchen is equipped to a high standard. There is ready access to information communication technologies (ICT) and ample storage has been provided.
- An up-to-date subject-specific, health and safety statement is in place, and it reflects the recommended risk assessment approach.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject department planning is well advanced, with all the normal structures and supports apparent. A team approach is evident, and planning outcomes are good.
- Teachers have engaged in review and evaluation activities, and arising out of such activity annual aims are identified. It is recommended that the department look at how these aims might be strategised. To this end, the introduction of action planning was suggested.
- An admirable current aim of the subject department is ‘to become more self-evaluating’. As an extension to this, it was suggested to teachers that they explore the concept of peer observation.
- A well-developed subject plan includes programmes of work for all year groups that demonstrate a number of positive attributes. They are developmental in nature, demonstrate effective integration, clearly identify when and where practical and project work takes place, and include space for teachers’ evaluations and observations.
- It is recommended that programmes of work be further developed. Teachers were advised to: ground each programme of work in an overarching set of learning intentions which identify the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to be garnered or developed; and to

provide topic-specific detail relative to resources, strategies, homework and assessment. Specifically, in relation to the TY module, it is recommended that content, and the all-important related learning, be orientated more towards senior than junior cycle.

- A high level of planning and preparation for co-curricular and extracurricular experiences is noted, with an emphasis on instilling in students an interest in food and cookery.
- Assessment planning documentation indicates that a range of assessment modes are being utilised. Modes appropriately provide for the evaluation of students' learning in theory, practical, project and journal work. Students' written work is regularly monitored, but it was noted that greater attention could be paid to the correction of spelling mistakes.
- Planning and preparation for observed lessons was very good, and lessons demonstrated consistency with planned programmes of work.
- A range of valuable resources were selected or developed for use in lesson delivery. Teachers have commenced the development of resource files that align with programmes of work. This is highly praised.

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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 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.