

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Home Economics
REPORT**

**Hazelwood College
Dromcollogher, County Limerick
Roll number: 71850B**

Date of inspection: 5 March 2014



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HOME ECONOMICS

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	4 and 5 March 2014
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching observed ranged from excellent to fair.
- There was evidence of learning in all lessons, although opportunities did exist in a small number of lessons to enhance learning for students.
- Teaching was student centred, and lessons facilitated active participation.
- Classroom atmosphere was positive.
- Home Economics is a very popular subject.
- Overall, planning and preparation for lessons was of a high standard.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Further exploration of suitable literacy development strategies is recommended.
 - The timetabling and deployment concerns noted in the report should remain high on management's agenda.
 - Curricular planning should be revisited with reference to the advice within.
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INTRODUCTION

Hazelwood College is a co-educational school under the auspices of Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. It has an enrolment of 531 students. In addition to Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate, the school offers an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. Senior cycle students can also participate in the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching in lessons observed ranged from excellent, where practice was of the highest quality, to fair, where there was scope for development.
- There was evidence of learning in all lessons, although opportunities did exist in a small number of lessons to enhance learning for students.
- Lessons had a clear plan, which was often communicated to students at lesson outset. It was suggested that teachers present intended learning outcomes in a manner that identifies what it is students will know and understand, what they will be able to do, and, as relevant, how their attitudes and values might be influenced.
- In order to scaffold learning, new material was introduced by linking it to previously studied topics. Simultaneously, at this point, students' existing knowledge and understanding was examined.
- In the main, lessons were structured around a series of well-planned activities and teacher interventions. This approach ensured variety for students and supported student engagement.
- Teachers' inputs were well informed. Such inputs were often supported by the introduction of quality visual stimuli, designed to support students' understanding and learning. In most lessons information communication technologies (ICT) were utilised to support an efficient and effective whole-class sharing of such stimuli. As relevant, the further use of ICT for this purpose was advocated.
- The approach to teaching was student centred, with active, student participation facilitated. Provision of pair and group activities also facilitated collaborative learning. Teachers were encouraged to explore the use of a greater range of cooperative learning strategies when organising pair and group activities. This might include, for example, strategies such as think-pair-share, placemat and three-step interview.
- On occasion, it was found that students would have gained more from planned activities, and their participation and learning could have been better supported and enhanced, by slightly increasing the amount of time spent teaching towards the task. As relevant, this merits consideration.
- Clear instructions were issued for activities, which were also well organised and managed. Teachers carefully monitored students' participation, and provided support to individuals or groups as necessary.
- Good questioning techniques were observed. Both global and directed questions were included; questions were distributed across class groups; teachers made good use of 'wait-time', supporting students with some prompting as required.

- Two, practical, food-studies lessons were observed, in which the outcomes ranged from very good to fair. Best practice was where a range of teaching and learning interventions were incorporated, including whole-class teacher inputs, on-the-spot demonstrations, teacher monitoring and one-to-one support. In one lesson a well-designed PowerPoint supported students to progress through the task with plenty of scope for self-directed learning. As relevant, this approach was further encouraged. Other practices that were praised included balanced provision for the development of students' knowledge, understanding, skills and competencies, and a strong emphasis on best practice principles in relation to food preparation and cooking. It was noted in one lesson that students were not adequately prepared for the assigned task, and that they would have benefitted from more advance teacher guidance and support.
- Teachers are conscious of the role they can play in supporting the development of literacy skills, but more work is needed in this area. It would be valuable to further agree strategies that could be used within the delivery of all home economics lessons, in the realms of reading, writing, listening and speaking.
- Classroom atmosphere was notably positive. Teacher-student rapport was good. Students' efforts were affirmed. Teachers have prepared stimulating learning environments, in particular in the textiles room and on the adjoining corridors.
- Teachers monitor homework completion on an almost daily basis. A more regular assessment of this work was recommended, using a combination of self-assessment, peer-assessment or teacher assessment. Some fine examples of teacher assessment were noted in corrected examination manuscripts, together with students' self-tracking of progress and achievement.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Home Economics is a very popular subject with a relatively good percentage of boys opting to study the subject despite the fact that a taster programme is not offered in first year.
- Access to Home Economics is supported by a student-friendly approach to subject choice. A compulsory TY module also supports further access at senior cycle.
- While timetabling is generally good, a few concerns were noted. This included, for example, the absence of double periods for some class groups. It was clear, however, that such difficulties stem from the challenges attached to timetabling four teachers for one kitchen. Management is hopeful that this will be addressed by the addition of a second kitchen, which should be operational by September 2015.
- Deployment of teachers is also generally good. It would be important, however, in the construction of future timetables, that sharing of class groups between teachers be avoided, and that continuity in the deployment of teachers from, for example, first year through to third year, be accommodated. It was also suggested that it would be valuable for the subject department, in conjunction with management, to agree a policy in relation to the rotation of teachers across programmes.
- Continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities are availed of, and there is a strong commitment to up skilling through involvement in the marking of relevant State examinations. To promote further sharing of lessons learnt, teachers are encouraged to systematically record their experiences of CPD involvements.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department planning is an established practice in the home economics department.
- A key aspect of this work is curricular planning, for which a number of recommendations were offered. This included the need to: agree top quality, outline, annual programmes of work; ground these in a set of overarching learning outcomes which are developmental in nature; integrate theory, practical and project work, together with relevant whole-school or subject-based activities. A review of the food studies element of the TY programme was also suggested for consideration.
- Self-evaluation is evident. Work has been initiated, for example, on a subject improvement plan. As a follow up to work already undertaken, teachers are encouraged to engage in related target setting. The establishment of links with school self-evaluation (SSE) work was also suggested.
- Overall, planning and preparation for lessons was of a high standard.

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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.