

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Home Economics
REPORT**

**Ennistymon Vocational School
Ennistymon, County Clare
Roll number: 70840Q**

Date of inspection: 20 May 2014



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

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HOME ECONOMICS

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	20 May 2014
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teacher• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- Very good quality teaching and learning was evident in the lessons observed. A good range of resources was used effectively to enhance teaching and learning.
- There was evidence of some good use of differentiation and active learning strategies, with scope to further develop resources to support differentiation.
- There was very good teacher-student rapport during all of the lessons observed.
- Practices and procedures in relation to homework and assessment in Home Economics are good.
- There is very good resource provision and whole school support for Home Economics.
- There were some good examples of ongoing self-evaluation evident, such as the analysis of student achievement in certificate examinations and progressive subject planning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The existing range of teaching resources used to support differentiation should be supplemented with additional resources to support students' learning during, for example, practical work and homework.
 - The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning should be extended.
 - A greater emphasis should be placed on learning outcomes in both planning and in lesson delivery.
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INTRODUCTION

Ennistymon Vocational School is a co-educational school operating under the auspices of Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (ETB). The school is one of three providers of post-primary education in the locality and serves a largely rural population. The mainstream enrolment currently stands at 133, with a further twenty-six students enrolled in continuing education courses. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative. Home Economics is undertaken by all students in the school's compulsory Transition Year (TY).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Very good planning and preparation resulted in very good quality teaching and learning. Lessons were structured, well-paced and good awareness of the range of students' learning styles within class groups was evident.
- A greater focus on learning outcomes is recommended. These should be communicated to the students at the beginning of the lessons and assessed at the end.
- The use of ICT in lessons ranged from the delivery of text-based presentations to the use of video content. The potential of ICT as a dynamic and interactive resource to support teaching and learning should be further explored. Students should also be encouraged to make fuller use of ICT.
- A good range of active learning methodologies including some differentiation strategies was incorporated into lessons. However, there is scope to further develop resources to support the use of differentiation and to incorporate them into existing active methodologies such as pair work, group work, peer presentations and especially peer evaluation to support students' learning.
- Well-organised practical work was observed and at appropriate intervals throughout, clear instruction was provided in relation to the steps of the task, importance of hygiene and safety, resource management, nutritional value of food, sensory evaluation, and the relevant underlying principles of cookery.
- Very good questioning and explaining strategies were integrated effectively to engage students in the learning activity, to check understanding and to support students in the development of higher-order thinking skills.
- All of the lessons observed were conducted in a supportive and affirming environment and mutual respect between all was evident in classroom interactions.
- Students were fully engaged in the learning activities and demonstrated good understanding of subject knowledge and various skills in practical work appropriate to their ability.
- To support students in integrating relevant theory with practical skills the design brief process should be introduced as early as possible in the junior cycle in both food studies and the practical textiles work. The introduction of a separate culinary skills notebook should support students in this regard.
- Practices and procedures in relation to homework and assessment in Home Economics are commendable and in line with the school's homework and assessment policies. Homework is regularly assigned and corrected in class as well as some provision of more

detailed oral and written formative feedback to enable students to improve the quality of their work.

- There is good use of self-assessment and students are awarded an aggregated mark throughout the year based on written tests, practical work and coursework. Revision plans with accompanying sets of revision exercises would further support examination classes.
- Good attention was paid to promoting the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. A whole-school approach is planned to encourage students to aim for a higher standard in terms of the organisation and presentation of their work.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Home Economics is a very popular optional subject in all year groups for both boys and girls. The uptake and in particular, gender balance in uptake significantly exceeds the national norms and is particularly good at junior cycle when one considers that the school is co-educational, with more boys than girls in attendance.
- An eight week subject sampling programme in optional subjects is undertaken by incoming first-year students. Optional subjects are then selected from pre-set subject bands and Home Economics is currently on the same band as Design and Communication Graphics (DCG). Subject option bands at senior cycle are formed annually based on students' preferences.
- Home Economics benefits from a very good level of resource provision and whole-school support. The school has a recently refurbished specialist room, which functions as a kitchen and a textiles room. The facility is very well maintained and resourced. Management is committed to the ongoing updating of resources and servicing of equipment for both food and textiles studies. In this context, the provision of some additional sewing machines and sewing equipment should be prioritised.
- A comprehensive health and safety statement, based on risk assessment was updated in 2014. The risk assessment should be extended to take cognisance of the fact that the kitchen is also used for practical textiles lessons. The role of the subject specialist should be explored in the context of undertaking future risk assessments.
- There is very good engagement with continuing professional development (CPD). Opportunities have been availed of to work as an assistant examiner in the marking of various components of the certificate examinations. This is commended as it provides opportunities to increase professional expertise. This commitment to CPD is supported by management.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Good progress has been made in developing a subject plan, which includes details regarding the organisation of the subject, as well as issues of a direct pedagogical nature such as planning, teaching and learning, and assessment. In addition, outline as well as more detailed schemes of work, which include methodologies, resources and assessment procedures have been drawn up for each year group. Expected learning outcomes should now be integrated into schemes of work.

- The school promotes reflection and self-evaluation as part of subject department planning. In this context, the teacher maintains daily reflections. Furthermore, a subject improvement plan has been developed, to include targets, success criteria and evaluation methods. Mechanisms for monitoring and follow-up with management would enhance the existing structure for subject improvement. A detailed subject self-evaluation survey has also been undertaken. This should be linked directly to the subject improvement plan.
- Students and their parents are advised regularly on their progress in the subject.
- Following comprehensive analysis of certificate examination results the subject department uses subject-specific insights to contextualise students' attainment regarding strengths, targets and actions for improvement.
- A range of co-curricular and subject related extracurricular activities provides students with opportunities to enhance and support learning. Home Economics makes very good links with Irish, French, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) and Green schools initiative.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teacher 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.