

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Home Economics
REPORT**

**Ballinode Community College
Ballinode, Sligo
Roll number: 72360M**

Date of inspection: 13 March 2013



**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	12 and 13 March 2013
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, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of planning, individual lesson preparation, and teaching and learning was good in the lessons observed.
- A good variety of methodologies including differentiation strategies was used to engage students.
- A very good range of resources is well-utilised to enhance teaching and learning.
- There is good monitoring of students' work on a continuous basis.
- Good rapport between teachers and students was evident.
- A very good collaborative approach exists within the subject team.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strategies to support students' in developing their writing skills should be agreed and implemented.
 - Teachers' use of a wider range of active learning methodologies is recommended in order to support diverse student learning needs.
 - To reflect the existing good practise in Home Economics consideration should be given to exploring the introduction of a whole-school approach to continuous assessment.
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INTRODUCTION

Ballinode College, is a co-educational school operating under the auspices of County Sligo Vocational Education Committee. The school is one of five providers of post-primary education in Sligo and has a large enrolment of 825 principally due to its post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses. The mainstream enrolment currently stands at 150. The school offers the full range of second-level curricular programmes. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative. Transition Year (TY) is currently not offered at the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- There was evidence of good teaching and learning in both the practical and theory lessons observed. Teachers' preparation for lessons was of a very high standard.
- Teachers made very good use of a range of resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), in planning and to support learning. Students were also encouraged to make very good use of ICT.
- There was evidence of some very good examples of the use of differentiation, for example by questioning and by teacher intervention during practical work. Students were challenged to foster independent learning in oral, written and practical work.
- Lesson content was well structured and teachers provided clear and accurate instruction supported by a good range of questioning skills. While teachers made use of a range of active learning methodologies, students would benefit from greater use of pair work, group work, peer presentations and especially peer teaching and peer evaluation to support their learning.
- Practical food studies lessons were well executed. Best practice was observed when there was a strong emphasis on the development of good practices in the areas of food preparation, cooking skills, hygiene, safety, resource management and self-evaluation.
- Good links were made between theory and related practical work and students benefited from the pre-teaching of key content in advance of the practical work.
- The wide range of practical and project work undertaken displayed the incremental development of students' skills in accordance with their abilities.
- Observation of and interaction with students and examination of their work indicated that they had a good understanding of subject knowledge and various skills in practical work appropriate to their abilities.
- Wide variations in students' literacy development were evident. The teachers should discuss, agree and implement a range of strategies to support students' in developing their writing skills.
- There was good teacher-student rapport during all lessons, which lead to a positive classroom atmosphere. Students were well behaved and positive affirmation of their efforts helped the teachers to raise expectations and standards amongst learners.

- Practices and procedures in relation to homework, revision, and assessment in Home Economics are commendable. Students' progress and competence is monitored and assessed effectively by a range of assessment modes, for example oral questioning, regular class assessments, homework assignments, and continuous monitoring of students' practical and project work. With regard to formative assessment, the good practice of annotation of students' work was evident.
- The good assessment practices observed for Home Economics could inform the development of a whole-school approach to continuous assessment to target a range of skills.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Home Economics is a very popular optional subject in all year groups, albeit traditionally a subject chosen predominately by the female cohort. Uptake significantly exceeds the national norms.
- In September a short taster programme enables first-year students to sample each optional subject. First-year students then select their optional subjects from pre-set subject bands and Home Economics is currently opposite Materials Technology Wood.
- The school is currently trialling an alternative approach for students entering senior cycle. They are provided with an open choice from a variety of optional subjects. Subsequently option bands are developed based on students' preferences. Such a student-centred approach to subject choice is laudable and consideration should be given to using this model of subject selection in first year. While recognising the constraints regarding subject choice options, the school should continue to support students in making less traditional subject choices, in order to encourage gender balance.
- Class period provision is generally in line with syllabus recommendations; however three timetable anomalies were identified during the evaluation. First, there is poor distribution throughout the week of some of the junior cycle classes. Secondly, the current fourth and fifth year students are taught in a multi-class situation, with some separation for practical coursework. Thirdly, Leaving Certificate Applied students undertaking the vocational specialism in Hotel, Catering and Tourism are taught with non-examination Hotel, Catering and Tourism students. These issues should be kept under review and addressed if possible, within the constraints of available resources.
- 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.
- The school should develop procedures for regular review of its health and safety statement in line with current guidelines and legislation.
- The home economics teachers are well-motivated and a strong commitment to continuing professional development is evident.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- There is very good collaboration in the home economics department with a focused approach to supporting all students to achieve their full potential. The teachers have developed a very good insight into individual students' learning needs and are commended for their flexible approach to supporting students with additional educational needs.
- Very good progress has been made in developing a comprehensive subject plan. In addition, both outline and detailed schemes of work exist up for each year group and these are used as working documents which is commendable.
- As an initial step in self-evaluation the teachers recently carried out a SWOT analysis and thereby, have identified the perceived subject specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. They stated their intention to develop and implement action plans, including timeframes, which will focus on achieving their key developmental priorities established from the SWOT analysis. There is also a focussed whole-school approach to implementing recommendations made during a recent incidental inspection which are targeted at improving student learning. The home economics team are commended for their development and implementation of action plans to support this whole-school initiative.
- Records of student achievement in certificate examinations are analysed annually and this informs future planning.
- Students and their parents are advised regularly on their progress in the subject.

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 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.