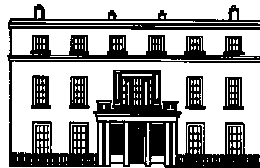


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Home Economics
REPORT

Donabate Community College
Donabate, County Dublin
Roll number: 761040

Date of inspection: 16 September 2015



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(s) of inspection:	15 & 16 September 2015
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good in all of the lessons observed.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is well used to support students' learning.
- Teachers have very high expectations of their students and deliberate efforts are made to encourage independent learning, as well as peer-assessment and self-assessment practices.
- There is a very good level of subject provision and whole-school support for Home Economics, but the effectiveness of timetabled provision for Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Hotel, Catering and Tourism should be closely monitored.
- The home economics team, in association with senior management, is proactive in its approach to optimising students' access to the subject.
- High-quality reflective practice underpins subject department planning in Home Economics.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The junior-cycle plan should be reviewed to integrate stages of the design brief process into practical lessons and to develop a wider range of practical skills in core textiles.
 - The health and safety policy for Home Economics should be extended to include a hazard analysis and risk assessment of each specialist room.
 - The revised Transition Year (TY) plan should be underpinned by a set of over-arching and differentiated learning outcomes, and assessment criteria should be devised for the main examinable component.
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INTRODUCTION

Donabate Community College is a co-educational school under the auspices of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). The school provides a broad range of curriculum programmes to cater for its diverse student population. Home Economics is provided as an optional Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate subject, and is a core component of the optional TY programme. Hotel, Catering and Tourism is a vocational specialism in the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good in all of the lessons observed.
- All lessons had a clear focus and a very good rapport was evident. Learning outcomes were routinely shared with students. Teachers set “goal questions” at the start of all lessons. This proved an effective assessment strategy during the concluding stage of lessons.
- There was a very good balance between teacher and student activity in lessons. The furniture layout in each specialist room allowed for the seamless integration of group work, pair work and peer-assessment activities. These activities were used effectively to reinforce learning.
- Good practice was evident in all of the practical food studies lessons observed. There was an appropriate balance between whole-class teaching and spot demonstrations to model key skills and support learning. However, there is a need to further encourage students to reflect also on their procedural skills in lessons. It is recommended that strategies to integrate the design brief process into practical lessons from first year be agreed and implemented. The strategies should support the incremental development of students’ skills in the areas of task analysis and evaluation.
- In all lessons a deliberate emphasis was placed on ensuring that students understood and used key terminology. Strategies that explicitly teach key comprehension strategies and enable students to become critical researchers should now be explored. This would support students in the completion of projects, tasks and key assignments.
- ICT is well used to support students’ learning. The home economics teachers make particularly good use of the school’s electronic platform to provide students with additional resources to support learning and provide feedback on work in progress.
- Teachers have very high expectations of their students and deliberate efforts are made to encourage independent learning. Good routines are evident in student notebooks. Further consideration could be given to devising strategies that support students to make summary notes of key concepts and interrelated topics.
- Commendable summative assessment practice is evident but there is scope to extend the range of question styles and written activities undertaken to encourage students to provide detailed answers.
- Students are making very good progress in Home Economics. Participation rates at higher level in the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations are very good, with positive outcomes noted.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is a very good level of subject provision and whole-school support for Home Economics. Timetabled provision is in line with syllabus guidelines, with a good distribution of class time in almost all Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate classes.
- The effectiveness of the timetabled provision for LCA Hotel, Catering and Tourism should be closely monitored. The current practice of placing LCA students in fifth and sixth year into one class group for this vocational specialism presents significant challenges in facilitating incremental learning. As the LCA programme becomes established in the school, senior management in association with a programme co-ordinator, should conduct an analysis of the elements of LCA that can best be combined and those components that are better timetabled separately.
- Students have very good access to Home Economics. The home economics team, in association with senior management, is very proactive in optimising students' access to the subject.
- The department is very well resourced. Health and safety procedures are very well established for home economics lessons but the health and safety policy needs further development. It is recommended that the policy be extended to include a hazard analysis and risk assessment for each specialist room. This assessment should be informed by the updating of the whole-school health and safety policy currently underway.
- The home economics team comprises two committed and enthusiastic subject specialists. It is evident that the team's engagement in continuing professional development has informed agreed teaching and learning practices in Home Economics.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department planning is well advanced. High-quality reflective practice underpins the work of the team. It is particularly commendable that students' views inform practice in home economics lessons. Trends from the analysis of student attainment in the in-house certificate examinations and findings from the relevant chief examiners' reports should also be used to inform on-going developments in teaching and learning in Home Economics.
- Programmes of work are used as working documents by teachers. This very good practice has resulted in programme plans being tailored to align specific resources and assessment strategies to various topics.
- There is a need to extend the range of textile skills being taught in junior cycle. It is recommended that planning for junior cycle core textiles be reviewed to promote a more integrated and incremental approach to teaching a wider range of skills.
- TY Home Economics is being reviewed. It is recommended that the revised plan be underpinned by a set of over-arching learning outcomes that are appropriately differentiated to support students who may not have studied Home Economics for their Junior Certificate, while at the same time challenging those who have previous experience of the subject. Assessment criteria should then be devised for the main examinable component.

- The home economics department plans and participates in a wide range of vibrant co-curricular activities.

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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

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 of Donabate Community College wish to acknowledge the positive affirmation of the high quality of teaching, subject planning and support from school management in our Home Economics Department. We are pleased that the use of ICT is acknowledged and that the school's high expectations for our students, which is reflected in our efforts to promote independent learning, peer assessment and self-assessment, was praised. The affirmation of the high quality reflective practice of our teachers is appreciated by the Board of Management. The recognition of the good practice of our teachers in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject along with the assessment practice is appreciated by the Board of Management.

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 school plans to implement the recommendations of the Subject Inspection Report in the following ways:

- The junior cycle plan will be reviewed to integrate the stages of the design brief process into practical lessons from first year. The focus of the integration will aim to support the incremental development of the students' skills in the areas of task analysis and evaluation.
- The planning for Transition Year in the future will include a set of over-arching learning outcomes that are appropriately differentiated to support students who may not have studied Home Economics in the Junior Certificate. The planning will include suitable challenges for students who have completed the subject at junior cycle. To ensure student progress is monitored accurately, assessment criteria will be created for the main examinable component.
- In respect of subject planning, trends in analysis of student attainment from in-house assessment, state examinations and the findings of the Subject Inspection Report will be combined to inform ongoing improvement to teaching and learning.
- A hazard analysis and risk assessment for each specialist room will be completed and this will be added to the whole school health and safety policy which is currently under way in the school.
- The school is aware of the challenges of the current practice of placing LCA students from two distinct year groups in a single class for a vocational specialism. We are aware that this presents difficulties for incremental learning. The school will attempt after analysis and subject to resource allocations to timetable separately this specialism to improve the learning experience for students.
- We will explore strategies that explicitly teach key comprehension strategies and enable students to become critical researchers and support them to complete projects, tasks and key assignments. There will be consideration given to devising strategies that support students to make summary notes of key concepts and interrelated topics.
- Building on the practice of good assessment, teachers will extend the scope of their questioning and activities to encourage students to provide for more detailed answers.