

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Home Economics
REPORT**

**Saint Raphael's College
Loughrea, County Galway
Roll number: 63070C**

Date of inspection: 13 March 2015



**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

Date of inspection	13 March 2015
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 six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- There was a high standard of teaching and learning in the lessons observed.
- Teachers made use of a variety of effective active learning methodologies which facilitated active student participation in their learning.
- A good range of resources was well-utilised to enhance teaching and learning.
- Very good rapport between teachers and students was evident.
- Practices and procedures in relation to homework and assessment in Home Economics are good, with some scope for development.
- A collaborative approach exists within the subject team, and the quality of subject planning and review is good, with some scope for development.

MAIN RECOMMENDATION

- To enhance existing practices, the subject department should further develop strategies to support assessment for learning (AfL), particularly formative feedback, in line with the whole-school policy in this area.
 - There is a need to include more detailed information on assessment modes in the schemes of work.
 - The outcomes of current and future self-evaluation activities should inform the identification of priorities and related action planning.
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INTRODUCTION

St. Raphael's College is a post-primary co-educational school under the trusteeship of the Catholic Education Irish School Trust (CEIST). The school is one of two providers of post-primary education in the town of Loughrea and has a current enrolment of 447 students. The school has an optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- There was a high standard of teaching and learning in the practical and theory lessons observed. Lessons had clear learning outcomes, were well structured and appropriately paced.
- Teachers made 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 good use of ICT.
- Questioning was used effectively in all classes to engage students in the learning activity, to check understanding and to link new information with prior learning.
- There were some very good examples of the use of appropriate active learning methodologies such as brainstorming, pair work, group discussion and peer presentations. Differentiation was facilitated well in many classes through questioning, one-to-one assistance and group tasks and this demonstrated the teachers' student-centred style.
- The practical lessons that were observed were well organised. Students were given clear tasks, defined time structures and guidance on hygiene, health and safety. Students were informed throughout the lesson about the nutritional and dietetic value of the food, the underlying principles of cookery and how to manage their resources.
- Students were responsive and engaged in the learning activities and demonstrated very good understanding of subject knowledge appropriate to their ability. The teachers set high expectations and the majority of students aspire to take higher level in the certificate examinations.
- Teacher-student rapport was mutually respectful and classroom atmosphere was extremely positive. Students' behaviour was very good in all lessons observed and they were well managed and directed in all learning activities. Their work was monitored carefully by teachers in a supportive and encouraging manner.
- Students have a positive attitude towards Home Economics and demonstrate a sense of pride and achievement in their work. The displays of educational posters and students' project work creates a stimulating print rich environment. Good attention was paid to promoting the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Students' progress and competence is monitored and assessed effectively by a range of assessment modes, for example oral questioning, regular class assessments, homework assignments, examination questions and continuous monitoring of students' practical and project work. In the context of the school's commitment to AfL and in addition to existing practices regarding whole-class correction of homework, teachers should provide more detailed formative feedback to students to support them to improve the quality of their work. Furthermore, strategies to further facilitate student self-assessment and peer-assessment should be developed and implemented to enable students to become more effective evaluators of their own work.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Home Economics is a popular subject option, especially amongst the female cohort, with overall uptake above the national average. Despite efforts to influence traditional context factors that may exist in relation to subject choices, gender imbalance in the take-up of Home Economics is apparent and the task of increasing uptake amongst the boys remains a challenge, particularly at senior cycle.
- Subject option bands at junior and senior cycle are formed annually based on students' preferences. Students and their parents are supported in arrangements for subject choices and levels within subjects through the use of guidance resources, linked to teacher advice, communication with parents, and information evenings at key stages. The school should consider exploring and implementing a range of methods to facilitate students in making a more informed choice with regard to subject choices.
- All students of the school's optional TY undertake a well-developed year-long cookery module. The TY home economics programme should include an overview of all aspects of Home Economics.
- Home Economics benefits from very good resource provision and whole-school support. Timetable provision for the subject is very good and particularly generous for sixth year. There are two separate specialist rooms for Home Economics: a new kitchen facility and a designated textiles room. Facilities for Home Economics will be further enhanced once the school's extension and refurbishment project is finalised.
- Home economics students have opportunities to expand their learning through a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. This is currently achieved through catering for school events, participation in competitions and involvement in such activities as a healthy eating campaign.
- Homework and assessment policies are in place for the subject and in line with whole-school policies. A health and safety statement based on risk assessment is in place and should be reviewed annually.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The home economics teachers work well as a team and engage in the process of collaborative planning, both on a formal and informal basis. A very good blend of experience and expertise exists among the home economics teachers. There was evidence of very good lesson planning and preparation, tailored for individual class groups.
- Very good progress has been made to date in developing a subject plan. Detailed schemes of work have been completed for each year group and include the time frames for the teaching of topics; learning outcomes and the corresponding methodologies linked to resources to be employed. However, there is a need to further develop the schemes of work to include more detailed information on assessment modes. It is laudable that these plans are used as working documents, as was evident from the inclusion of teacher reflections.
- Some commendable examples of ongoing self-evaluation were noted such as student self-evaluation, review of students' attainment and subject review. To further develop self-evaluation as part of subject department planning, developmental priorities for Home

Economics should first be identified and shared with management. Action plans, including timeframes for their implementation, should then be developed to achieve these priorities. Success criteria should be designed to appraise progress.

- Students and their parents are advised regularly on their progress in the subject. Records of student achievement in certificate examinations are analysed annually.

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