

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Home Economics
REPORT**

**Presentation Secondary School,
Ballingarry, County Tipperary
Roll number: 65240L**

Date of inspection: 1 March 2016



**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

Dates of inspection	1 March 2016
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 three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in observed lessons was good.
- Teacher inputs were well informed.
- Students' involvement in lessons was encouraged, albeit mainly through questioning and answering.
- In practical food studies, lessons expectations were clearly communicated, proper technique was emphasised and, as a result, students were competent and confident.
- Home Economics is appropriately timetabled and well resourced.
- There is a good level of engagement with subject department planning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It was recommended that teacher modelling of what is required of students, and an increased incorporation of visual resources, be utilised to support enhanced student learning in theory lessons.
 - A deeper exploration and subsequent use of group work is recommended.
 - An increased use in theory lessons of activities intended to support the development of students' higher-order thinking skills was recommended.
 - The decision to offer Home Economics against French at senior cycle should be reviewed.
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INTRODUCTION

Presentation Secondary School, Ballingarry is a co-educational, voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education, An Irish Schools Trust). In addition to established Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes, students may also opt to participate in a Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. Current enrolment is 216 students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in observed lessons was good.
- Good quality planning and preparation resulted in lessons that were well structured, appropriately pitched and suitably paced.
- The plan for the lesson was clearly communicated to students at the outset. Well-constructed learning intentions provided the basis for this. A variety of verbs were utilised, and due attention was paid to the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes to be garnered or developed during the lesson.
- Teacher inputs were well informed. It was recommended that explicit teacher modelling of what was required of students, together with an increased incorporation of visual resources, would have enhanced student understanding and learning in the observed theory lesson.
- Students' involvement in lessons was encouraged, albeit mainly through questioning and answering. In relation to questioning, some specific advice was offered in relation to the need to foster the engagement of the less confident student. The incorporation of strategies such as, for example, think-pair-share and all-student response systems was suggested. Such strategies would facilitate the greater participation of these students, while building their confidence to participate as individuals at whole-class level in the future.
- Group work was accommodated in one lesson, although it was recommended that additional time be provided for task processing, and the associated and all-important agreement and recording of significant learning. An exploration of the range of co-operative learning strategies around which group tasks can be organised and facilitated would be valuable. All planned group activities should be benchmarked against the elements of effective group work, namely: individual accountability; positive interdependence; collaborative skills; face-to-face interaction; and processing the group's academic and social effort.
- Practical food studies lessons were very well executed. Expectations were clearly communicated to students, and there was a strong emphasis on proper technique. As a result, students demonstrated a very good level of competence and an admirable confidence. It was suggested that greater emphasis be placed on hygiene, safety and resource management during practical food studies lessons. The seamless integration of theory relevant to the dish being prepared was commended.
- Specialist rooms are well organised and managed. It was noted that there is some scope for increasing signage, as well as displays of relevant subject information. The latter should, ideally, include some student work.

- While students' independent activity and learning was very well facilitated in the practical food studies lesson that was observed, learning was more teacher led in the theory lesson. Related student copybooks also indicated much note taking. It was suggested, for example, that the provision of handouts and the requirement on students to note take be balanced more with activities that support the development of students' higher-order thinking skills. The greater incorporation of note-making strategies, which would teach students how to annotate, mind map or organise information graphically, paraphrase and summarise, is one example of how this balance might be achieved.
- Classroom atmosphere was most conducive to student learning, strongly supported by encouraging and supportive teacher-student interactions.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Home Economics is a very popular subject choice with students. Uptake levels in both junior cycle and senior cycle exceed national averages, and across year groups, a relatively healthy number of male students have chosen to study the subject.
- Due to resourcing constraints, Home Economics is timetabled opposite Materials Technology Wood in the junior cycle subject band, but this does not appear to be an issue currently. Uptake patterns and trends should, however, be closely monitored on an ongoing basis. Home Economics is timetabled opposite French in senior cycle and this is a concern, as it may restrict access to Home Economics for all students. It is recommended, therefore, that this practice be reviewed.
- Home Economics is appropriately timetabled and well resourced.
- There is a clear consciousness around health and safety, and related rules of engagement have been prepared and communicated to students. The completion of a risk assessment was advised. The outcomes of this assessment should inform the next review of the rules, as well as any signage to be erected in the specialist rooms.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- It was clear that there is good engagement with subject department planning. It was advised that a record of planning activities should be maintained which would document activities engaged in, decisions made and related follow-up plans and actions.
- The subject plan provides valuable data relative to provision, planning, teaching and assessment. An exploration of how it might also serve as a space that records the outcomes of review activities, and the all-important related action planning, was suggested for consideration. Examples of review activities include: comment-based analyses of state examination results; school-specific and subject SWOT analyses that identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for development and threats; student surveys relative to teaching and learning.
- The subject plan contains good quality, outline programmes of work for all year groups. These are updated annually, time bound, developmental in nature, and provide detail relative to both theory and practical work. It was suggested that, at times, integration of practical and theory could be better accommodated, and that provision for practical food

studies might be better spread across the year. The development of more detailed programmes of work, akin with the existing first year programme of work, was recommended.

- It was recommended that the TY plan be reviewed, as it became clear that the plan itself did not wholly reflect the very good work being undertaken with students. It was also noted that the documented plan drew heavily from the junior cycle home economics syllabus. As part of the recommended review, it should be borne in mind that TY Home Economics is best when it serves as a bridge to Leaving Certificate Home Economics, seeking to equip students with the skills and competencies required by the relevant syllabus.
- Planning for co-curricular activities is strong, and there is evidence of some cross-curricular planning too. It was suggested that the latter might provide an opportunity for the facilitation of some peer observation.

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