

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Home Economics**  
**REPORT**

**Ashton School**  
**Blackrock Road, Cork**  
**Roll number: 81008W**

**Date of inspection: 9 November 2012**



**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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	9 November 2012
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teacher</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teacher</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning in Home Economics is very good.
- Students' involvement in lessons was well facilitated; there was variety in the demands placed on students, and opportunities were provided for them to work both independently and co-operatively.
- Significant attention was paid to the promotion of independent thought, critical thinking and logical reasoning in students.
- Provision and support for Home Economics at whole-school level is very good.
- The contents of a comprehensive subject plan indicate a detailed recording of information and facts, but also provision for activities that promote professional consideration and reflection.
- The planning and preparation for lessons observed was of a very high quality.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Additional attention should be paid to promoting the development of students' subject-specific and general literacy levels as part of topic teaching.
  - To further enhance the quality of existing programmes of work, the incorporation of detail relating to resources, methodologies and assessment ought to be considered.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Ashton School is a co-educational, post-primary school. It was founded in 1972, when Rochelle School and Cork Grammar School merged on the Grammar School site on the Blackrock Road. It has a student population of 501, comprising 288 males and 213 females. The curriculum currently offered in the school includes an optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning in Home Economics is very good.
- Intended learning outcomes were explicitly shared with students as lessons commenced. Links were established between planned learning and previous learning, with opportunities to examine related knowledge and understanding well exploited.
- It was found that, as part of topic teaching, additional attention should be paid to promoting the development of students' subject-specific and general literacy levels.
- Lessons were well structured and appropriately paced, with smooth transitions from one part of each lesson to the next.
- Instruction provided to students was clear and thorough. Commendably, formal teacher inputs were followed by the provision of student tasks designed to strengthen understanding and support learning. Assigned homework activities were equally constructive.
- Students' involvement in lessons was well facilitated, with a healthy variation in the demands placed on students over the course of lessons. Students were afforded the opportunity to work both independently and co-operatively, and this activity was closely monitored and supported by the teacher.
- Significant attention was paid to the promotion of independent thought, critical thinking and logical reasoning in students. This was obvious both in the construction of activities and in the management of students' impromptu questions and comments.
- An appropriate, early emphasis, as observed in one first-year lesson, is placed on the key concepts associated with practical food studies activities, namely, planning and preparation, time management, resourcefulness, and health and safety. This corresponded with a more general finding whereby high, yet realistic expectations are clearly communicated to students.
- To build on the already strong emphasis in lessons on student learning, it was recommended that time be provided at lesson conclusion to revisit the intended learning outcomes and use them as a tool against which to measure levels of students' knowledge and understanding acquired.
- Classroom atmosphere was very positive, with warm, respectful interactions between teacher and students. Students demonstrated interest in the subject matter being explored, and they engaged enthusiastically in associated lesson activities.
- Well-organised student workspaces supported student participation in assigned practical tasks. The walls of the specialist room were used to display students' work, word banks to support the completion of food studies evaluations, and signage designed to direct students' safe and hygienic participation in practical food studies lessons.

- Tasks specific to the topic under exploration were differentiated according to students' abilities and the related intention to sit a higher level or ordinary level state examination. However, when constructing tasks to accommodate the varying demands and detail of these two levels, it is important to ensure that the construction and design of such activities is appropriately challenging, that is, not too easy or too difficult.

#### **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Home Economics is provided in all of the curricular programmes, and it is appropriately timetabled. The planned end-of-year evaluation of the impact of recent changes in the timetabled provision for TY Home Economics was noted as positive.
- An equality of access for students to Home Economics is supported by the operation of a subject choice system that is based on students' preferences. The overall approach to this aspect of curriculum organisation is highly organised and well managed.
- The specialist room, and the subject in general, is reasonably well resourced, including the provision of information communication technologies (ICT). A room-specific, health and safety audit has been completed, and it is reviewed regularly. With a new school building in process, new home economics facilities are also imminent.
- Attendance at relevant continuing professional development events and workshops is fully supported by management.
- Assessment at subject level, which has many positive attributes and is inclusive of each of the examinable components of relevant syllabuses, is supported by an established, whole-school reporting system. Progress reports are issued, for example, to parents of senior-cycle students on a monthly basis.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The scheduling by management of termly subject department meetings supports planning. The outcomes of only the most recent of these meetings have been recorded in the subject plan, therefore the ongoing documentation and filing of decisions taken or actions arising out of all subject department meetings is encouraged. This information will inform the subject department's self-evaluation of progress and achievement in relation to, for example, subject department specific goals and plans.
- A comprehensive subject plan has been developed, and its contents indicate a detailed recording of information and facts, but also provision for activities that promote professional consideration and reflection. For example, an analysis of the subjects' strengths, challenges, opportunities for development and potential threats has taken place, detailed class profiles have been prepared, and students' results in the State examinations have been documented and analysed.
- Good quality programmes of work that are grounded in learning outcomes have been developed. Another positive feature of these documents is the fact that theory and practical work have been very well integrated and linked, both in junior and senior cycles. Planning and provision for senior cycle food assignments also demonstrate that programmes are updated annually. There was some evidence of the filing of resources to correspond with programmes of work, a very valuable practice. To further enhance the

quality of the documents, the incorporation of detail relating to resources, methodologies and assessment ought to be considered.

- The planning and preparation for lessons observed was of a very high quality, with a wide range and number of resources prepared and collected for use in lesson delivery.

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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.