

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

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

**Saint Clare's Comprehensive School**  
**Manorhamilton, County Leitrim**  
**Roll number: 81013P**

**Date of inspection: 3 March 2016**



**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**

<b>Date(s) of inspection</b>	2 & 3 March 2016
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to deputy principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Some very good strategies to support high-quality teaching and learning were evident in all of the lessons observed.
- A high level of teacher creativity is apparent in planning for lessons.
- Teachers have high expectations of their students and a very good rapport was evident in lessons.
- Exceptionally good use is made of information and communications technology (ICT) to enhance the profile of Home Economics and recognise student achievement.
- The specialist rooms are very well resourced and have been developed into stimulating print-rich learning environments.
- Subject department planning in Home Economics is focused and complements the whole-school initiatives being led by senior management.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Additional strategies that enable students to apply and analyse information and assess their deep understanding of complex concepts should be incorporated into all lessons.
  - Assessment criteria should be further developed for the Transition Year (TY) practical food studies module.
-

## **INTRODUCTION**

Saint Clare's Comprehensive School is a co-educational school with a total enrolment of 491 students. Home Economics is an optional subject in the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes. The subject is a core component of the school's optional TY programme.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Some very good strategies to support high-quality teaching and learning were evident in all of the lessons observed.
- The quality of advance planning and preparation was very good for all lessons. A range of methodologies was carefully planned for each lesson, and a high level of teacher creativity was apparent in the selection and preparation of additional resources.
- In all of the lessons observed, teachers had very high expectations of their students and a very good rapport was evident. Planned learning activities were well managed and lessons took place in stimulating classroom environments.
- All lessons were well structured and began by sharing clear, well-phrased learning intentions. This strategy was very effective in supporting incremental learning in instances where the planned outcomes were appropriately differentiated; or where students had opportunities to link the outcomes to previous learning or prior knowledge.
- Teacher explanations were very clear, with some good integration of relevant literacy and numeracy concepts. Additional resources were well used to facilitate understanding and support learning. For instance, students' attention was directed to key questions that should be answered from watching video clips. On another occasion, a series of worksheets supported students' revision of a topic included in a recently completed examination.
- Some very good use was made of questioning strategies, group-work and pair-work activities to support and assess learning. On occasion, there was scope to adjust the pace of the lesson to deepen learning. Additional strategies that enable students to apply and analyse their learning should be incorporated into all lessons and sufficient time should be provided to assess students' deep understanding and progress in the more complex lesson concepts.
- Very good routines were evident in the student notebooks reviewed during the evaluation. It is particularly commendable that students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning. Homework is assigned regularly and very good use of comment marking was noted. Additional opportunities for peer-assessment and self-assessment should be explored.
- A review of student copybooks and examinations completed indicated that there is scope to extend the range of question styles used and written activities undertaken to challenge students' higher-order thinking further. The range of written work assigned should be expanded to support the development of an extended array of analytical skills.
- In the practical lesson observed, there was an appropriate balance between whole-class teaching and spot demonstrations to model and emphasise key manipulative skills. Students displayed a very good range of procedural and practical skills. It is particularly commendable that the design brief process was integrated into the lesson and that key

language skills that supported students in evaluating their completed tasks were overtly developed.

- Observation of students' practical coursework in the area of design and craftwork indicated very good levels of creativity and expertise in craft and textile skills. Additional opportunities to integrate stages of the design brief process into textile studies from first year should be considered.
- High expectations are created for students in Home Economics. Participation rates at higher level in the certificate examinations are very good. Notable positive trends in student outcomes are evident.

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

- There is a very good level of subject provision and whole-school support for Home Economics.
- The home economics team makes exceptionally good use of information and communications technology (ICT) to enhance the profile of Home Economics and recognise student achievement. A wide range of co-curricular activities broadens the range of learning opportunities provided.
- There is very good access to Home Economics. The short first-year taster programme and the subject-sampling layer in TY support students in making informed subject choices. The length of the taster programme could be re-examined in the context of implementing the revised Junior Cycle Framework.
- Subject timetabling is in line with syllabus requirements. However, in instances where classes have only one double lesson period, this should not be timetabled over lunchbreak to avoid the logistical difficulties in undertaking practical cookery lessons.
- The home economics team comprises two very committed and enthusiastic subject specialists. A high level of reflective practice underpins the work of the team. The team's engagement in continuing professional development (CPD) has impacted positively on student learning.
- The specialist rooms are very well resourced and maintained. A proactive approach is adopted to upgrading facilities, with systematic procedures in place to manage health and safety.

### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The quality of planning and preparation is very good, with some high-quality practices noted.
- Subject department planning in Home Economics is underpinned by action plans which are focused, measurable and complement the whole-school initiatives being led by senior management.
- Common programme plans are well developed with some good integration of literacy and numeracy concepts. There is scope to develop the learning outcomes for some topics and maximise integration in the sequencing of topics.

- The home economics team has made some very good use of school data to inform targets in priority areas such as student uptake, attendance and strategies to encourage student responsibility. Some very good progress has been made in the targets set. As a next step, an analysis of data from trends in attainment in the certificate and house examinations should inform the next set of specific teaching and learning priorities in Home Economics. This review will also inform future priorities and agreed actions in supporting numeracy and literacy.
  - Home Economics in TY incorporates a commendable range of learning activities. The creative and thematic approach used in the practical food studies module provides for very good differentiation. There is scope to develop the assessment plan for the food studies module. Assessment criteria should be developed for this module. These criteria should be underpinned by the overarching key skills being developed, inform the modes of assessment deployed, and provide the basis for the subsequent student feedback provided.
- 

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the deputy principal and home economics 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**

**Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management commends the Home Economics department on the positive outcome of the report.

**Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

The report and its recommendations has been given to all subject departments. The Home Economics teachers have given a presentation to all staff members. The recommendations will be included in the action plans for 2016/17.