Subject Inspection of Home Economics
REPORT

Colaiste Mhuire
Ballygar, County Galway
Roll number: 62900M

Date of inspection: 2 February 2012
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HOME ECONOMICS

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>2 February 2012</th>
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<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods</strong></td>
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<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
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<td>• Discussion with principal and teacher</td>
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<td>• Interaction with students</td>
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MAIN FINDINGS

- The standard of teaching and learning was of a high quality in all the lessons observed and there was evidence of some use of differentiated teaching.
- A very good range of resources, including information and communication technology (ICT) resources, is well-utilised to enhance teaching and learning.
- Very good teacher-student rapport was evident.
- The school has recently refurbished the home economics room; however the updating of equipment is ongoing.
- The quality of planning for programme organisation is good, with some scope for development.
- Practices and procedures in relation to homework, revision, study and assessment in Home Economics are commendable.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Differentiated teaching should be further developed.
- Consideration should be given to using an open choice approach to subject selection in first year.
- All available means should be explored with regard to the necessary ongoing replacement and maintenance of specialist equipment.
- Curricular planning for Home Economics should be further developed.
INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Mhuire is a co-educational voluntary secondary school which serves a largely rural student population with an enrolment of 204 students. It is the only post-primary school in the area. Transition year (TY) is optional at the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of advance planning, individual lesson preparation, and teaching and learning was very high in both the practical and theory lessons observed.

- Instruction was accurate, and was delivered in a manner that indicated very good levels of subject knowledge. The use of a range of relevant visual and tactile stimuli and resources to enhance teaching and consolidate learning is commended. ICT was used effectively in planning as well as a teaching and learning tool.

- During practical work there was a suitable balance between teacher instruction, demonstration and time to allow students to work independently. There was evidence of good continuity with previous learning and appropriate integration of theory with practical skills. Students are encouraged to undertake evaluations of tasks completed. In general, they were able to demonstrate their ability to undertake various practical tasks to a good standard.

- In all the lessons observed effective questioning and explaining strategies were used to engage students in the learning activity and to check understanding.

- There was evidence of some use of differentiation, for example by questioning and by teacher intervention during practical work. In the context of the mixed-ability classes observed, the use of differentiated teaching strategies should be further developed so that students continue to be challenged to foster independent learning in oral, written and practical work.

- Classroom management and student engagement were very good. Classroom practice was characterised by very good teacher-student rapport and an atmosphere conducive to learning.

- High expectations are set and the majority of students aspire to take higher level in certificate examinations. Observation of and interaction with students indicated that they had a very good understanding and knowledge of the subject and various skills in practical work appropriate to their year group and ability.

- Practices and procedures in relation to homework, revision, study and assessment in Home Economics are commendable. 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. The good practice of annotation of students’ work was evident and useful teacher comments provided valuable feedback to students on their progress and affirmed work well done.

- Good attention was paid to promoting the development of students’ literacy and numeracy skills.
SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Home Economics is a popular optional subject at Coláiste Mhuire and is taken by all students in TY.
- Uptake is well in line with the national average. Albeit traditionally a subject chosen predominately by the female cohort, there has been a slight increase in the number of boys taking Home Economics recently.
- In September a short taster programme enables first-year students to sample each optional subject. First-year students then select their optional subjects from pre-set subject bands. The curricular content of the home economics taster programme should be reviewed in order to reflect all aspects of Home Economics.
- Students entering senior cycle are provided with an open choice from a variety of optional subjects available. Subsequently option bands are developed based on students’ preferences. Such a student-centred approach to subject choice is laudable and consideration should be given to using this model of subject selection in first year. While recognising the constraints regarding subject choice options, the school should continue to support students in making less traditional subject choices, in order to encourage gender balance.
- There is very good whole school support for Home Economics. Class period provision is in line with syllabus recommendations and is generous for TY.
- The school has a recently refurbished specialist room, which functions as a kitchen and a textiles room. However, further work is required to update the equipment.
- Management is committed to the ongoing replacement of equipment and resources to enable all aspects of Home Economics to be delivered. In the context of syllabus requirements, it is recommended that all available means be actively explored with regard to the necessary ongoing investment in the upgrading, replacement and maintenance of specialist equipment for both food and textiles studies. In particular the provision of some new sewing machines and sewing equipment should be prioritised.
- The school should develop procedures for regular review of its health and safety statement in line with current guidelines and legislation.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Very good progress has been made in developing a subject plan. In addition, outline curricular plans, including timeframes for delivery of topics, have been drawn up for each year group. It is recommended that more comprehensive short-term curricular plans be developed to include the learning outcomes to be attained, the corresponding methodologies, resources and assessment modes. These should be utilised as working documents. A review section should also be included to support self-evaluation. Furthermore, it is necessary to link the theory with the relevant practical and project work to be completed.
• There was some evidence of ongoing self-evaluation, mainly from informal end-of-year reviews. As part of the process of subject planning, self evaluation should be progressed, with the support of management. Developmental priorities, including timeframes for their implementation, should be identified. Action plans should then be developed to achieve these priorities and performance indicators designed to appraise progress.

• The plan for TY Home Economics provides for great variety and focuses on the development of key transferable skills.

• A range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities provides students with opportunities to enhance and support learning.

• Records of student achievement in certificate examinations are analysed annually and this informs future planning of teaching strategies and learning activities.

• Students and their parents are advised regularly on their progress in the subject.

• Individual lesson planning was very good and it is positive that records of work completed are maintained.

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 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.

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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 Coláiste Mhuire, Ballygar are very pleased with the report. In particular we welcome the main findings which place positive emphasis on the high quality of teaching and learning observed, coupled with the reference to the whole school support for Home Economics.

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 board of management will continue to support and promote the teaching and learning of Home Economics in the school through the continued provision of the required class time, resources, opportunities for continuing professional development and the promotion of co-curricular activities.

The board acknowledges that the refurbishment to date, which consists of new cupboards and doors, new floor, and new appliances such as ovens, washing machine, dryer and refrigerator, has improved the facilities but has not addressed the question of specialist equipment.

The board is committed to the ongoing replacement of specialist equipment and resources for Home Economics. We are currently in the process of applying for a grant to the Department of Education and Skills to replace, upgrade and maintain our specialist equipment. We look forward to receiving a positive response from the Department.

The board will assist the home economics department in the implementation of the recommendations of the report.

The board would like to thank the home economics inspector for her hard work and cooperation.