

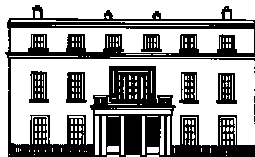
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Home Economics
REPORT**

**Rockwell College
Cashel, County Tipperary
Roll number: 65300D**

Date of inspection: 30 September 2011



**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

Date of inspection	30 September 2011
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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in Home Economics is good.
- As a result of the excellent planning, organisation and management of activities in the practical food studies lesson observed, students' achievements were significant.
- Home Economics demonstrates very healthy uptake levels, both in junior and senior cycle.
- Home Economics is generally well timetabled.
- High expectations are set for home economics students.
- Programmes of work have been documented for each year group.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consideration should be given to the incorporation of a greater variety of more student-centred methodologies.
 - School management should give priority to advancing investigations around how the school's facilities for home economics could be better accommodated.
 - Programmes of work should be further developed.
 - Consideration ought to be given to how existing approaches to self-evaluation could be extended to include a focus on classroom practice.
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INTRODUCTION

Rockwell College is a co-educational, fee-paying secondary boarding school. It demonstrates a current enrolment of 516 students. The school provides an optional transition year (TY) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in Home Economics is good.
- Lessons were purposeful, and demonstrated relevance to both the syllabus and the planned programme of work. They were well structured and appropriately paced.
- The introductory phase of all lessons included a commendable focus on learning outcomes, although it is suggested that a more elaborate sharing of these would be beneficial. As appropriate, it is also suggested that learning outcomes be re-introduced over the course of lessons, as well as at lesson conclusion, where they could be used as a tool against which student learning could be measured.
- Instruction, which was clear and accurate, was delivered in a manner that indicated very good levels of subject knowledge.
- Student learning was enhanced in lessons by the introduction of appropriate images or visuals, a very strong and very commendable feature of lesson delivery.
- A lecture-style delivery predominated in theory lessons. However, an effective use of questioning, in combination with requests for student comment, provided students with opportunities to participate in lessons.
- It was observed that the main requirement placed on students during theory lessons was to listen, albeit in combination with some note-taking or annotation. When designing lessons therefore, it is recommended that consideration is given to seeking to vary the demands placed on students over the course of each lesson. In doing so, the incorporation of strategies that will provide for students individual learning styles, be they, for example, visual, auditory or kinaesthetic, could be considered. A greater use of co-operative learning strategies in theory lessons is also recommended, for the very valuable peer learning opportunities that such strategies promote.
- As an alternative to the more traditional approach of note-taking, students could be taught how to note-make. To this end, good use might be made of mind maps, graphic organisers and writing frames in the delivery of lesson content.
- In the practical food-studies lesson observed, students' achievements were significant, particularly in light of the obvious shortfalls in the school's home economics facilities, a matter which will be addressed in the following section. It was noted that opportunities to teach relevant theory could be more fully availed of in practical lessons.
- Students were respectful and co-operative and interactions were pleasant and positive. This gave rise to a positive classroom atmosphere.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Students have the option of studying Home Economics to both Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate levels, and while the school's student cohort is predominantly male,

uptake of the subject at both levels is very healthy. This can be credited, in part, to the taster courses offered in both first year and TY, which are supporting students in the making of more informed subject choices.

- The school's approach to subject choice ensures that students' access to home economics is on par with all other optional subjects.
- Overall, Home Economics is appropriately timetabled, with supplementary classes provided for the school's repeat Leaving Certificate class to increase their formal contact time with the subject.
- The teacher deployed to teach Home Economics avails of professional development opportunities on a continuous basis.
- While students' practical work is extremely well planned, organised and managed by the teacher, the home economics facilities available are inadequate. However, it should be noted that management is currently investigating how the subject could be better accommodated in the school. In the interest of enhanced learning, any new arrangements should provide a facility where room layout, fitting and equipping is such that pair work can be accommodated in all practical lessons.
- In some instances, class size is bordering on being too large, particularly in light of the facilities available to deliver the practical component of syllabuses. This needs to be addressed by management.
- A safety statement has been compiled for the home economics room. It commendably identifies hazards, risks and existing controls, as well as additional controls needed. A percentage of the additional controls can only be addressed through a room upgrade or by its re-allocation. This, as alluded to previously, is being investigated by management. The advancement of this investigation is strongly advocated.
- High expectations are set for home economics students, as evidenced by the percentages of students who take higher-level papers in both of the certificate examinations.
- Whole-school reporting procedures, together with very good recording practices at subject department level, ensure that parents are kept very well informed in relation to students' participation, progress and achievement.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Formal subject department planning is supported by management, and this has facilitated the development of a subject plan.
- Programmes of work, which detail the work to be covered each week, have been documented for each year group. The programmes also identify the relevant pages of the textbook, which is the key resource used in the delivery of lesson content. Practical and project work are also included, although provision for textiles studies needs to be considered in the next review of the junior cycle programme plans. Over time, the further development of programmes of work is recommended. Suggested developments might include provision for topic-specific learning outcomes, a more complete list of resources used in the delivery of each topic, and detail relating to the teaching, learning and assessment strategies to be incorporated into specific lessons.
- In identifying the 'next steps' in subject-department planning, consideration ought to be given to how existing approaches to self-evaluation could be extended to include a focus

on classroom practice. The completion of appropriate self-appraisal exercises is suggested, as is an exploration of how relevant student opinion might be accessed.

- Preparation for lessons observed resulted in lessons that were well planned, and this supported the systematic delivery of lesson content.

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.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

We are reviewing our Home Economics Facility. A D.E.S. staff member has visited the college to make recommendations.