

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Home Economics
REPORT

Coláiste Mhuire,
Askeaton, County Limerick
Roll number: 71700F

Date of inspection: 22 April 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	22 April 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching in lessons was consistently good, and very good at times, and there was good evidence of learning.
- Lessons were inclusive of students' inputs and activity although on occasion, there was an over reliance on questioning and note taking.
- Teachers have provided students with high quality instruction relative to important examination components.
- Practical food studies lessons were very well executed.
- Provision and support for Home Economics is very good.
- Well-developed programmes of work have been prepared, which are updated on an annual basis.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It was recommended that teachers seek to provide for greater variety in what is required of students in lessons, to include the embedding and development of co-operative learning strategies.
 - As detailed within, certain aspects of the programmes of work require review.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Mhuire is a co-educational post-primary school operating under the auspices of County Limerick Education and Training Board (ETB). Current enrolment is 504 students. In addition to Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate, the school offers the option of a Transition Year (TY) programme as well as the Leaving Certificate Vocational programme (LCVP).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching in lessons was consistently good, and very good at times, and there was good evidence of learning.
- Learning intentions were appropriately shared with students. These were of better quality when constructed around student learning rather than content to be covered, and best when they included reference to the knowledge to be garnered and also the skills and attitudes to be fostered.
- Lessons were inclusive of students' inputs and activity although on occasion, there was an over reliance on questioning and note taking. As a result, and as relevant, it was recommended that teachers seek to provide for greater variety in what is required of students in lessons. Furthermore, teachers were encouraged to investigate the value of teaching students to note make through the use of, for example, graphic organisers and writing frames.
- Clear and accurate inputs were provided by teachers, often supported by electronic presentations. In one instance, advice was provided in relation to the need to reconsider slide design, layout and animation.
- Provision for students whose preferred learning style is visual was very strong.
- It was clear from students' work, in particular the Junior Certificate projects and the Leaving Certificate journals, that teachers have provided students with high-quality instruction relative to these important examination components.
- One co-operative learning strategy, namely think-pair-share, was utilised in two lessons. Student folders indicated that its introduction is relatively recent. Its further incorporation, together with other related strategies, which range from the simple to the more complex, is recommended. The further incorporation of these teaching strategies will remedy the observed reluctance of students to work together, whilst also bringing other pedagogical benefits.
- In one instance, and with regard to the management of student activity in a theory lesson, more teacher monitoring of students' participation was highlighted as necessary.
- In planning pair or group work, it was advised that all planned activities be benchmarked against the five 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.
- Questioning of students was good, as was student answering. On occasion, it was advised that there was greater scope for more asking and less telling.
- Practical food studies lessons were very well executed. A very positive seamless integration of relevant theory was noted, and there was a strong emphasis in lessons on

good practice in the areas of preparation, cooking and serving. It was clear that students have been well inducted into proper hygiene and safety procedures. Students worked confidently, and outcomes were of a high quality. Students' independent activity was supported through the provision of handouts, task differentiation charts, on-spot demonstrations, and close teacher monitoring.

- Teacher-student relations were noted as very positive.
- It was obvious from students' files that they are strongly encouraged to systematically file notes and related materials.
- Homework designed to extend and build on learning initiated in lessons, was assigned in all instances.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision and support for Home Economics is very good.
- Home Economics is an extremely popular subject, demonstrating uptake levels that exceed national averages. It is positive that male students are represented in all year groups.
- Students' access to the subject is favourable, with their preferences informing the construction of subject bands. The decision to cease offering a taster programme in first year should be kept under ongoing review.
- Timetabling is very good across all year groups and programmes.
- Deployment is fair and balanced. Both teachers are involved in the teaching of all year groups, with the exception of TY. If the desire exists, it would be good to rotate the responsibility for delivering the TY home economics programme.
- The subject is well resourced, with requests relating to replacement, upgrading and maintenance given favourable consideration by management. Facilities are well maintained.
- A subject-specific health and safety statement has been prepared and it is positively based on a risk assessment. It references the kitchen floor covering as a 'major slip hazard', a finding that merits investigation by management.
- The subject department has clearly articulated a homework and assessment policy, and its content reflects much good practice. The importance of regular collection and marking of homework is emphasised in the policy, but the practice as observed in students' copybooks and folders was mixed. This indicates a possible area for development.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The subject plan contains well-developed programmes of work. It was positive to note that these were being annotated over the course of the academic year and that related observations would inform updating which is undertaken on an annual basis. It was

suggested that the next steps for the department would be a shared filing of resources to correspond with the programmes of work.

- Teachers were advised to evaluate planned provision for both practical and theory work in junior cycle, by benchmarking planned provision against the weightings provided in the syllabuses. Teachers were also advised to ensure provision for exploration of the construction of a simple item of clothing with junior cycle students.
- The content of the TY programme of work, which draws strongly from the junior cycle syllabus, should be reviewed. Teachers were advised 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.
- As part of the annual review of the fifth-year programme of work, it was advised that actual assignments be built into the programme alongside related and relevant theory.
- It was noted that as part of subject department planning, there is scope for the completion of more review type activities, the outcomes of which should be linked to action plans for improvement.
- The quality of planning and preparation for observed lessons ranged from good to very good.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wished to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

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 welcomes the findings of the inspector's report affirming consistently good practice in the teaching of Home Economics in the school.

The report commends the well-developed programmes of work and it recognises that practical food studies lessons are very well executed. It identifies the high quality instruction given to students regarding exam components. It is pleasing to note that the positive relationship between teachers and students was identified.

The Board wishes to commend the members of the Home Economics Department for their professionalism, hard work and commitment to their students.

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

Suggestions and recommendations have been noted and are currently being addressed as a means of building on existing strengths.

The TY programme has been reviewed and aspects of the Leaving Certificate syllabus have been incorporated as per the recommendation. Consideration will be given to rotating the delivery of same for next year's timetable.

School management & LCETB will address the issue of the kitchen floor covering.

The Board would like to thank the inspector for the professional and courteous manner in which the inspection process was conducted and for the constructive feedback given to school management and the teachers.