

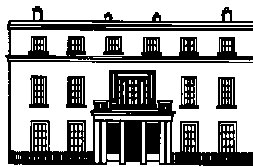
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Home Economics
REPORT**

**St Declan's Community College
Kilmacthomas, County Waterford
Roll number: 72230W**

Date of inspection: 10 February 2015



**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	9 and 10 February, 2015
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 8 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from very high quality to scope for improvement.
- Lessons were student-centred.
- In practical, food-studies lessons standards varied, but some good practice was observed.
- There was a pleasant atmosphere in classes.
- Provision and support for Home Economics is generally good, but the equipping of the specialist rooms does not fully meet syllabus demands.
- Programmes of work exist for each year group, but these do not wholly influence teachers' approach to lesson delivery.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Significant improvement is required in some instances regarding the teaching of practical food-studies. The recommendations provided in this report in relation to enhancing students' learning in such lessons should be implemented.
 - Planning and provision for the assessment of student learning, including the key area of homework, was identified as an area for development. Specific recommendations are provided within.
 - It is recommended that the specialist rooms be audited against syllabus requirements, to inform the preparation of an equipment replacement and updating action plan.
 - Programmes of work need to be reviewed for relevance and meaning, following which they would benefit from some further development.
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INTRODUCTION

St Declan's provides co-educational post-primary education for 674 students, under the patronage of Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (ETB). The curriculum incorporates the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), a compulsory Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from very high quality to scope for improvement.
- Lessons were purposeful. Good practice was observed when the purpose was shared with students through an explicit sharing of intended learning outcomes. This approach needs greater application in practical food-studies lessons.
- The valuable practice of creating links with prior learning was most apparent in theory lessons. In practical food-studies lessons it was not fully facilitated. A more integrated approach in such lessons, and one which supports both the introduction and review of relevant theory, is recommended.
- Teacher inputs were well informed. At times, in practical food-studies lessons, these good quality inputs had minimal impact. This was because students were allowed to stay on task when they should have been called to attention. This resulted in the fragmented application of proper procedure by students. As relevant, there needs to be a more systematic and ordered approach to the provision of whole-class instruction in practical lessons.
- In practical, food-studies lessons standards varied, but some good practice was observed. Communication of expectations around key areas such as safety, hygiene, and resource management was noted at times. In some lessons, the emphasis placed on process was on a par with or greater than the emphasis on completing the assigned task. This is important. On-spot demonstrations were also well utilised on occasion to support applied learning.
- In some instances significant improvement is required in relation to the teaching of practical, food-studies lessons. School management is encouraged to facilitate continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities such as sharing good practice, peer observation and discussion of the chief examiner's report.
- Theory lessons were particularly student-centred, and students' active participation was required throughout. Well-organised activities were closely monitored, allowing the teacher to provide differentiated instruction where necessary. Questioning in these lessons was effective, used both to check understanding and to challenge students. Resources, many of them visual, were introduced regularly to support verbal explanations.
- In addition to the use of student note-taking, teachers should look at building students' capacity to note-make. It was suggested to teachers that in tandem with the incorporation of a range of note-making strategies, they explore the value of using directed activities related to texts (DARTS) with students.

- There was a pleasant atmosphere in classes. Students demonstrated enthusiasm for subject matter being explored, as well as interest in learning. Overall, students were cooperative and responded well to teacher direction.
- Teachers' approach to the assignment, correction and monitoring of homework should be reviewed in the interest of enhancing students' learning. When correcting homework, for example, teachers are encouraged to point students in the direction of a correct answer, rather than providing the answer via teacher comment. In tandem with this change, some form of re-monitoring will be required. A stronger emphasis on 'success criteria', and the sharing of this with students, is also recommended during the assignment and correction of homework.
- It is positive that students in the same year group sit common, key assessment papers. In the acknowledgement of students' achievement in reports home, some teachers provide an aggregate mark. This approach, which takes account of students' written, practical and project work and is a more accurate indicator of actual achievement, should be adopted by all teachers.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Aside from the equipping of the specialist rooms, subject provision and support is good.
- Uptake levels in Home Economics are very good in junior cycle, and uptake in senior cycle has recently increased.
- The current timetabling of Home Economics is favourable, and students' access to the subject is fair and equitable.
- The provision of two kitchens facilitates equity of access to the practical components of all programmes for all class groups. It was noted that the level of equipment in both kitchens does not adequately meet the demands of syllabuses. Subject department minutes support this finding. It is recommended that rooms are audited against syllabus requirements. The outcomes of this audit should inform the development of a replacement and updating action plan.
- JCSP students cannot include Home Economics as part of their JCSP certificate. It is recommended that this decision be reviewed.
- The rotation of teachers across year groups and programmes is largely facilitated. The exception is Hotel, Catering and Tourism (HCT), a vocational specialism in LCA. This lack of rotation was raised as a negative with the inspector. While acknowledging that it is not always beneficial to rotate specialisms, as a teacher's familiarity with and experience of related syllabuses is beneficial to students' learning and achievement, it is suggested that the matter be discussed further at school level. Any resulting decisions need to be in favour of students' learning.
- A safety statement is in place. It is good that it is structured in line with published guidelines, but it should take account of the dual-purpose nature of the rooms, which accommodates both the delivery of practical food studies and practical textiles studies.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Programmes of work exist for each year group. There was much evidence, however, to suggest that these do not wholly influence teachers' approach to lesson delivery. Programmes should be reviewed in terms of relevance and value.
- Programmes possess many positive attributes, but they need further development. The identification of topic-specific learning intentions, provision for meaningful topic integration, and the linking of learning intentions to a range of assessment strategies, are recommended developments.
- With school self-evaluation (SSE) being embedded in school culture, it would be valuable if the subject plan reflected whole-school plans and targets. The plan should also detail how the subject department intends to contribute to implementation and achievement.
- Planning and preparation for lessons was generally satisfactory and at times it was excellent.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject 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; a response was not received from the board.