

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Home Economics  
REPORT**

**Davitt College  
Castlebar, County Mayo  
Roll number: 76060U**

**Date of inspection: 19 March 2015**



**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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	18 and 19 March 2015
<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 nine class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Teaching and learning were of a very high quality and were characterised by excellent lesson planning, and a very good emphasis on enhancing students' capacity to learn.
- Teachers had a student-centred approach and make excellent use of a variety of active-learning strategies and stimulating resources which engaged students very effectively and supported learning.
- Very good rapport between teachers and students was evident and lessons were characterised by a positive and supportive approach.
- A commendable range of assessment modes is utilised to determine student progress and competence, however there is scope for these to be reflected in the schemes of work.
- Provision and support for Home Economics at whole-school level is very good.
- The home economics teachers work well as a team and readily engage in the process of collaborative subject planning, which is well advanced and underpinned by reflection and ongoing self-evaluation.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- In addition to current practices for whole-class corrections, there is a need to provide more detailed formative feedback to students to support them to improve the quality of their work.
  - To reflect existing good practice in home economics lessons, agreed modes of assessment should be integrated into the schemes of work.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Davitt College operates as a co-educational school under the auspices of Mayo, Sligo, and Leitrim Education and Training Board (ETB). The school is one of three providers of post-primary education in Castlebar. The mainstream enrolment stands at 747, with a further 291 students enrolled in adult and continuing education courses. All curricular programmes are offered, including an optional Transition Year (TY). The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department's action plan for educational inclusion.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Teaching and learning of a very high quality were characterised by excellent lesson planning, the use of student-centred classroom activities, and clear learning outcomes that were shared at the beginning and assessed at the end of the lessons.
- Teachers made excellent use of a range of effective resources, including differentiated teaching resources, which provided the students with visually stimulating and intellectually challenging learning experiences. Information and communication technology (ICT) was used effectively in planning as well as a teaching and learning tool. Students were also encouraged to make very good use of ICT.
- The teachers' subject knowledge was accurate and very good links were made with students' prior knowledge. Some excellent examples of effective use of active-learning methodologies were observed and there was good awareness of the need to teach to the range of students' learning styles within class groups. Effective questioning and explaining strategies were used extensively 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.
- Subject matter was well structured and there was appropriate integration of theory with practical skills. Well-organised practical work was observed and at appropriate intervals throughout, clear instruction was provided in relation to the steps of the task, the importance of hygiene and safety, resource management, the nutritional value of food, and the relevant underlying principles of cookery. The expert use of spot-demonstration strategies in the practical classes observed is to be commended as it ensured all students were on task and allowed the teachers to model best practice. To support students in integrating relevant theory with practical skills the design brief process should be introduced as early as possible in the junior cycle in both food studies and the practical textiles work.
- There was a good focus on the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. Furthermore, the learning environment was enhanced through displays of subject materials and students' work.
- Exemplary standards of behaviour and respectful student-teacher relationships were evident during the evaluation. Students have a positive attitude towards Home Economics and demonstrated a sense of pride and achievement in their work.
- The teachers set high expectations and the majority of students aspire to take higher level in the certificate examinations. Observation of and interaction with students indicated that

they had a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and demonstrated a high level of competence in practical and project work in accordance with their abilities.

- 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. In addition to current practices for whole-class correction of homework, teachers should provide more detailed formative feedback to students to support them to improve the quality of their work and this should be reflected in the homework and assessment policy for Home Economics. There is also a need to develop a whole-school assessment policy.

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

- Home Economics has a high profile at Davitt College and this can be attributed to the work of a committed, reflective and pro-active home economics department that is well supported by the management of the school.
- Home Economics is a very popular optional subject as evidenced by its high uptake at both junior and senior cycle. Gender balance was noted in that the number of boys taking Home Economics at junior cycle significantly exceeds the national average. However, in senior cycle the subject is chosen predominately by the female cohort.
- Incoming first-year students undertake a short subject sampling programme. Subject option bands for both cycles are formed annually based on students' preferences. All students of the school's optional TY undertake a short three-week theory module in Home Economics. Management's desire to increase, when feasible, the teaching resources to permit a lengthier and more varied TY Home Economics module is acknowledged. Hotel, Catering and Tourism is a popular elective offered to Leaving Certificate Applied students.
- Timetabled provision for Home Economics is in line with syllabus guidelines. Deployment of teachers facilitates their rotation across all levels and programmes and provides for continuity from year to year when this is practicable.
- Currently the two kitchens are utilised as dual purpose rooms to accommodate food and textiles studies. Management is very supportive of requests made for the ongoing maintenance and updating of equipment and resources.
- The school's policy for health and safety, including risk assessment has been drawn up in consultation with teachers. Until such time as the former specialist room for textiles be re-established, risk assessment documentation ought to make reference to the current dual-purpose nature of both kitchens.

### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A very good blend of experience and expertise exists among the teachers and the role of subject co-ordination is rotated. It is laudable that teachers meet formally once a week.
- The subject department plan is a comprehensive document. In addition, detailed schemes of work exist for each year group. These include, timeframes, learning outcomes, methodologies, assessment modes and resources, albeit that there is scope to tailor the assessment section to reflect particular topics. Therefore, the good assessment practices observed in lessons should be reflected in the schemes of work.

- An extensive range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities provides students with opportunities to enhance and support learning.
- Students and their parents are advised regularly on their progress in the subject. Records of student achievement in certificate examinations are analysed annually and this informs future planning.
- The teachers are progressive in terms of reflection and self-evaluation as part of subject department planning. In line with whole-school practice, annual subject reports are submitted to senior management. Such ongoing reviews are highly commendable and lead the team to constantly modifying their approaches to enhance student learning.

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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.

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