

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Home Economics
REPORT

Gairmscoil na bPiarsach
Ros Muc, County Galway
Roll number: 71380N

Date of inspection: 28 April 2014



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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	28 April 2014
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 five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of planning, as well as teaching and learning was of a high standard in the lessons observed.
- A good variety of active learning strategies and higher-order questioning was used to engage students.
- Irish was the language of instruction used in all lessons, however, a number of students choose to undertake their certificate examinations through English.
- A good range of Irish-medium teaching resources, is well-utilised to enhance teaching and learning.
- There was very good teacher-student rapport during all of the lessons observed.
- There is good resource provision and whole school support for Home Economics.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- In the context of mixed-ability classes, some further use should be made of differentiation in order to cater for diverse student learning needs.
 - The school should continue in its efforts to support students in undertaking their examinations through Irish.
 - In the context of resource provision, the need for some additional sewing equipment should be prioritised.
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INTRODUCTION

Gairmscoil na bPiarsach is a co-educational school operating under the auspices of Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board. Situated in Ros Muc in the Connemara Gaeltacht, the school provides a broad education and the mainstream enrolment currently stands at ninety seven. Irish is the normal spoken language of the school and all school activities are conducted through the medium of Irish. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative. Transition Year (TY) is currently not offered at the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- There was a high standard of teaching and learning in both the practical and theory lessons observed. Lessons had clear learning outcomes, were well structured and appropriately paced.
- Classroom instruction was provided through the medium of Irish. This commitment to the promotion of the Irish language is in line with school policy and the efforts to meet these challenges is praiseworthy. It was noted that a number of students in each year elect to undertake their coursework and certificate examinations through the medium of English. The school is urged to continue in its efforts to support students in undertaking their examinations through Irish.
- Very good links were made with students' prior knowledge and this was built on effectively during the lesson. There was good awareness of the need to teach to the range of students' learning styles within class groups. High levels of individual support tailored to students' needs was observed.
- Some good examples of the use of active-teaching methodologies were observed. In addition, there was evidence of some use of differentiation. In the context of the mixed-ability classes observed, the use of strategies for differentiation should be further developed so that students continue to be challenged to foster independent learning in oral, written and practical work.
- During practical work observed, there was an appropriate balance between teacher instruction, demonstration and time to allow students to work independently. Best practice was observed regarding the development of key skills in the areas of food preparation, cooking skills, hygiene, safety, resource management and self-evaluation.
- There was very good use of targeted questioning to test student knowledge, to elicit information from students and to challenge them to reflect on the topic. Some very good use of higher-order questioning was evident.
- Good attention was paid to literacy and subject-specific terminology was reinforced well, in addition to a focus on numeracy in some lessons. In addition, the learning environment was enhanced through displays of subject materials.
- Students were conscientious and engaged well in their learning. Very good teacher-student rapport was evident, which led to a positive classroom environment. Students were very well behaved and positive affirmation of their efforts helped the teacher to raise higher expectations and standards amongst learners.
- Students' progress and competence is monitored and assessed effectively by a range of assessment modes.

- High standards were set with regard to the setting and monitoring of homework. Students generally displayed good levels of knowledge and understanding appropriate to their ability. Some very good practice was observed regarding the provision of formative feedback to students.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Home Economics is a very popular optional subject in all year groups, albeit traditionally a subject chosen predominately by the female cohort. A short optional subject sampling programme is undertaken by incoming first-year students and by fifth-year students on entry into senior cycle. Subject option bands are created in consultation with students and within the constraints of available resources. The school has a role to play in supporting students in making less traditional subject choices, in order to encourage gender balance. Arrangements for subject choices should continue to be reviewed over time in consultation with the partners involved.
- Home Economics benefits from good resource provision and whole-school support. The school has a recently refurbished specialist room, which functions as a kitchen and a textiles room. Equipment and resources are well-maintained and management is supportive of requests made for the ongoing replacement and servicing of specialist equipment for both food and textiles studies. In this context, the provision of some additional 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. Risk assessment ought to make reference to the dual-purpose nature of the room.
- A strong commitment to continuing professional development is evident. Considerable upskilling has been undertaken in order to be competent in delivering the subject through Irish. Much credit is due to both school management and the teacher for the progress made to date with regard to provision of Irish medium instruction for Home Economics. Opportunities to work as an assistant examiner in the marking of various components of the certificate examinations, through the medium of Irish, is being considered.
- Home economics students have opportunities to expand their learning through a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. This is currently achieved through provision of guest speakers, cookery demonstrations, participation in competitions and involvement in such activities as a healthy eating campaign, the Green School Programme, the Junior Certificate School Programme and catering for various school events.
- A homework policy is in place and there is a need to develop an agreed whole-school assessment policy.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Preparation for individual lessons was of a high standard. A good range of Irish-medium class notes, teaching resources, including information and communication technology, is well-utilised to enhance teaching and learning. Consideration should be given to making greater use of Irish-medium text-books.
- The subject department plan is a comprehensive document. In addition, both outline and detailed schemes of work exist for each year group. The detailed schemes of work

include, learning outcomes, methodologies and resources for each year group. A review section is also included to support teacher self-evaluation and this informs future planning.

- There is good collaboration between the teacher and learning-support personnel to facilitate a focused approach to supporting students with additional educational needs.
 - Records of student achievement in certificate examinations are analysed annually and this informs future planning.
 - Partnership with parents is a key priority for the school. Assessment outcomes are recorded systematically and reports are sent home four times a year.
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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.

Published December 2014

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

Gairmscoil na bPiarsach, Ros Muc and the Galway/Roscommon Education and Training Board welcome the report on the subject Inspection of Home Economics as an opportunity to evaluate the working practices of the school. We are satisfied that this report approves overall of the working methods in the above mentioned subject. The Gairmscoil (Vocational School) is extremely proud of the good atmosphere that exists between the students and the teaching staff of the school which assists us in providing a high standard of education in Irish for our school community

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 verbal feedback given by the inspector to the principal and to the subject teacher was discussed with the teaching staff following the inspection at a staff meeting on the 28 04 14.

The recommendations in this report will be discussed at a meeting of the school's teaching staff on the eighth of December, 2014. The home economics teacher and, in line with good practice, all the other teachers will be requested to implement the recommendations in that report in their subject plans before February 2015.

A report regarding this will be provided to the school's Board of Management at the meeting in May 2015.

This is a translation of the School Response submitted by the Board of Management.