

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

Subject Inspection in Home Economics

REPORT

School name	St Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School
School address	St Patrick's Close Dublin 8
Roll number	60660I

Date of Inspection: 05-03-2019



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

SUBJECT INSPECTION

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Home Economics under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

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.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	04 and 05 March, 2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

St. Patrick's Cathedral Grammar school is a voluntary co-educational secondary school with a current enrolment of 200 students. Home Economics is an optional subject at Junior Cycle and at Leaving Certificate level. Home Economics is also offered as a core module as part of the compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good with elements of very good practice.
- A positive and productive classroom atmosphere was evident which supported student enjoyment in learning.
- Highly effective teacher questioning was evident in lessons which encouraged higher-order thinking; limited use of written formative feedback was evident on students' work.
- Digital technology was used effectively by the teacher to support and enhance students' learning; students did not have the opportunity to utilise digital technology to support or assess their own learning.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support was good; student voice is not sought to inform the construction of subject option bands for incoming first-year students.
- The overall quality of planning and preparation was satisfactory; programme plans are in place for all year groups, however, some are outline in nature, lack an incremental approach to learning and are replications of publically available templates which have not been modified.

Recommendations

- A systematic approach to providing written formative feedback on students' work should be implemented by the subject department.
- Strategies to enable students to utilise digital technology to support and assess learning should be adopted by the teacher.
- Senior management should survey incoming first-year students to ascertain optional subject preferences and use this information to construct subject bands.
- Programme plans should be reviewed by the Home Economics department to include reference to teaching and assessment strategies utilised, reflect an incremental approach to learning and personalise plans to meet the learning needs of students.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Through their own enthusiasm and enjoyment of Home Economics, the teacher motivated students to engage in and enjoy their learning. A very positive classroom atmosphere was created by the teacher and this was underpinned by affirmation and mutual respect.
- Instruction was clear and directed at eliciting student engagement. A good balance was maintained between teacher input and student voice. Positively, students were confident to answer questions, ask questions and were willing to risk incorrect responses.
- A student-centred approach was adopted in all lessons. Lessons began in all instances with students brainstorming what they already knew about the topic. This enabled students to make links between prior learning and new material. To build on this very good practice, at the end of lessons, students should summarise new learning and add this to their original brainstorm.
- It was good practice that learning intentions were shared with students in all lessons. In some instances, learning intentions focused on content. Learning intentions should be stated in terms of what students should know, understand and be able to do. Best practice was observed when learning intentions were revisited and assessed at the end of lessons. Sufficient time should be allocated to assess learning and strategies which enable the learning of all students to be evaluated should be adopted.
- Digital technology was effectively used in the classroom by the teacher to support and enhance students' learning. Well-designed visual presentations were created to structure students' learning. Presentations included images which aided teacher explanations and an appropriate video clip was utilised. Positively, the teacher utilised an online game to check students' understanding of key words. Students did not have the opportunity to utilise digital technology to support or assess their own learning. Strategies to enable students to utilise digital technology to support and assess learning should be adopted by the teacher.
- Highly effective teacher questioning was evident in lessons. Questions were utilised to revisit prior learning, enable students to make co-curricular links, develop lesson content and to encourage higher-order thinking.
- Many students did not have copybooks in class. This should be addressed. A variety of practice was noted in how students record their learning in copybooks. Students should be supported to record learning in a meaningful way.
- Evidence of self-assessment was viewed in copybooks and students used marking schemes to assess questions. This is very good practice. To ensure that the corrected questions are a useful revision tool, students should highlight the appropriate part of their answer which was awarded marks. When answers are not fully correct, students should ensure that the correct answer is recorded.
- Limited use of formative feedback was evident on students' work. A systematic approach to providing written formative feedback should be implemented by the subject department.
- In lessons, students were required to generate notes. Teacher-designed handouts were distributed in all lessons and these helped structure students' note-making. It is very good practice that students are supported in developing note-making skills. Students should be facilitated to take more ownership for generating their own notes as they gain competence and confidence in note-making.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of whole-school support and subject provision is good.
- Timetabling arrangements are in line with syllabi and specification guidelines and in general a very good distribution of lessons is evident throughout the week.
- It is very good practice that senior cycle option bands are generated based on student preferences. However, student voice is not sought to inform the construction of subject option bands for incoming first-year students. It is recommended that senior management survey incoming first-year students to ascertain optional subject preferences and use this information to construct subject bands.
- The short taster programme in first-year and the compulsory Home Economics module in TY supports students to make informed subject choices.
- Home Economics facilities comprise a recently renovated and well-maintained kitchen. A risk analysis template has been created for the Home Economics room. The multipurpose nature of the room has been reflected in this template, though scope exists for it to be extended to reflect all potential hazards including knives. It is recommended that the Health and Safety Authority template is adopted and utilised to facilitate an annual audit of facilities by the subject department. Once completed, this document should be shared with senior management.
- It is highly commendable that the Home Economics department in conjunction with the Physical Education department organises an annual 'Health Week'. Last year, this event included a range of physical activities for students to participate in, high-profile guest speakers and the sampling of healthy snacks and meals. Furthermore, an annual 'Bake Off' competition further promotes Home Economics in the school as students and staff participate in the competition and judge the baked entries.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning and preparation is satisfactory.
- Planning for individual lessons was very good.
- Programme plans are in place for all year groups. However, some programme plans are outline in nature, lack an incremental approach to learning and are replications of publically available templates which have not been modified. Programme plans should be reviewed by the Home Economics department to include reference to teaching and assessment strategies utilised, reflect an incremental approach to learning and personalise plans to meet the learning needs of students.
- Practical lessons should be integrated into programmes of work alongside theoretical lessons and learning intentions should be outlined to ensure an incremental development of skills.
- Examination results in certificate examinations are analysed annually and results are compared with national averages. This is good practice. To further this good practice, individual student achievement in certificate examinations should be examined in conjunction with Cognitive Ability Testing (CAT) results to ascertain if students are achieving their expected potential.
- To implement continuous improvements in teaching and learning, an action plan outlining short, medium and long term goals should be devised by the Home Economics department.

- A record of continuing professional development attended should be recorded in the subject plan.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the subject teacher at the conclusion of the evaluation.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;