An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Home Economics
Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Ballinteer Community School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Broadford Road Ballinteer Dublin 16
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	91305L
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	14-03-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	15/05/2023

What is a 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 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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Child Protection</td><td>Anti-bullying</td></tr>
<tr><td>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.</td><td>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013) and this policy is reviewed annually.
2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the Procedures) since the previous report to the board.
3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils/students.</td></tr>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Subject inspection

Dates of inspection	14-03-2023 and 16-03-2023
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students, including focus groups	• Observation of teaching and learning during three lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Ballinteer Community School is a co-educational secondary school under the combined trusteeship of the Brigidine Sisters, the Carmelite Fathers and the Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). At the time of the inspection, the school had an enrolment of 416 students. The Junior Cycle, the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) are provided. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme, the action plan of the Department of Education for inclusion.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was appropriate; lessons ranged from appropriate to good.
- The overall quality of subject provision for Home Economics was good with some very good practice evident; one-hour lessons are creating challenges in achieving highly effective learner experiences in food studies practical lessons.
- The home economics department recognises the need to promote the subject in the school and it is positive that students' work and engagement in co-curricular activities are showcased to the school community.
- It is highly commendable that the subject department has established links with a local social enterprise to enhance learner outcomes and experiences, in particular in the area of food sustainability.
- The home economics teacher has shown commendable engagement with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and has shared their learning with their peers at whole school-level and at an international conference.
- The overall quality of subject planning was good.

Recommendations

- Homework should be assigned on a regular basis to enhance students' learning experiences and outcomes.
- Differentiation strategies should be maximised in lessons to support all learners to achieve their full potential. In particular, opportunities for upward differentiation should be planned for.
- School management, in collaboration with the subject department, should explore strategies to address the identified shortcomings in class time currently available for food studies practical lessons.
- A TY programme plan should be devised which enables all students to progress their learning, including those who have previously studied the subject.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was appropriate; lessons ranged from appropriate to good.
- Student behaviour was very good in all lessons visited. Interactions between students and their teachers were very respectful and this supported a cooperative learning environment in lessons.
- In the focus group discussion, students shared that they enjoyed their learning in the subject. In lessons, students were motivated to engage in the tasks presented.
- In most lessons, students had opportunities to learn collaboratively. In the food studies practical lesson observed, many students worked in large groups. This resulted in insufficient opportunities for students to undertake tasks and limited the development of students' practical and procedural skills. It is recommended that students should, where possible, work in pairs.
- In the food studies practical lesson observed, students were familiar with classroom routines. In the focus group discussion, students were positive about the frequent opportunities provided to engage in practical lessons.
- Spot demonstrations were regularly utilised by the teacher in the food studies practical lesson observed and this supported students to develop and refine their practical skills. At times, there was scope for the teacher to include additional food science inputs to enable students to understand why tasks should be completed in a particular way.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was effectively used by the teacher in most lessons and this included sharing exemplars of work. In some lessons, students made effective use of ICT to access digital resources such as podcasts and resources which had been shared by the teacher. It is good that students' digital skills are being developed as they use digital technology to present some assessment tasks.
- In undertaking Leaving Certificate coursework, it is positive that students are well supported to develop research skills while undertaking this work.
- In most lessons observed, homework was assigned and students were reminded to note this work in their diaries. In one lesson, highly effective practice was evident as students were provided with a choice in relation to the homework to be completed. However, a review of student copybooks, diaries and online folders showed that there were limited quantities of homework assigned during the school year. In one lesson observed, considerable time was assigned to students applying corrections to a previously completed piece of work. Ensuring that students understand and can apply the feedback provided by the teacher to improve their learning is very good practice. However, to maximise the use of class time, students should be appropriately supported to undertake more of this work as homework. The highly effective practice in setting homework observed during the inspection should be extended.
- At times, teacher designed handouts which included clearly articulated learning intentions for previously taught units of learning were observed in students' folders. In the lessons observed, students were told what they would do or learn about. Where possible, clear learning intentions and success criteria should be shared with students and revisited during lessons. This would support students to reflect and assess if the intended learning has been achieved.
- Very good one-to-one feedback was provided to students by the teacher during lessons and this approach supported individual students in making progress. At times in lessons, there was scope for students to be further challenged or supported. In order to ensure that opportunities exist for all students to progress their learning, a variety of differentiation strategies should be planned for and this could include differentiated activities.

- In most lessons, good teacher monitoring of student copybooks or folders was observed. In some lessons, some written formative feedback was observed on students' work and at times students were provided with digitally recorded formative feedback.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- The overall quality of subject provision was good with very good practices evident.
- Students have very good access to Home Economics which is optional subject at Junior Cycle and at Leaving Certificate. All TY students study a module of Home Economics. Subject option bands are structured based on student preferences and this is very good practice. A subject-sampling programme is provided for first-year students. In focus group discussions, students were very positive about how this approach is supporting them in making informed subject choices.
- It is highly commendable that the subject teacher, supported by school management, has engaged in numerous professional development opportunities. It is very positive that the senior management team has created opportunities for the teacher to share their learning at staff meetings. It is notable that the teacher has presented research findings from post-graduate studies at an international conference.
- To support students with additional education needs in home economics lessons, the senior management team have deployed additional teaching resources to facilitate team teaching.
- It is positive that the subject department is aware of the need to promote the subject in the school. The subject teacher has established very positive relationships with a local social enterprise which aims to inspire people to make informed food choices and this has provided a variety of learning experiences for students, in particular in the area of sustainability and food production.
- The subject department has exclusive use of a well-resourced needlework room and a kitchen. To address minor maintenance issues in the kitchen and to support the ongoing resourcing of facilities as necessary, a concise plan with short-term, medium-term and long-term goals should be devised.
- One-hour classes are providing challenges in delivering highly effective learner experiences in food studies practical lessons. School management, in collaboration with the subject department, should explore strategies to address the identified shortcomings in lesson time currently available for these lessons.
- The home economics department has recently revised the risk assessment for the home economics facilities and this has been shared with senior management. This is very good practice.
- The senior management team places a strong focus on seeking continuous developments in teaching and learning to support ongoing improvements in learner outcomes and experiences. This is supported through action planning at subject department level.

3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of subject planning was good.
- It is good practice that school improvement targets are considered in the context of teaching, learning and assessment in Home Economics and strategies associated with supporting the attainment of these targets were evident in planning documents. At times, the implementation of the strategies identified could be strengthened in lessons.
- Subject department minutes of meetings and agendas have been filed in the subject plan which is shared with senior management. This is effective practice.
- It is positive that the subject department works collaboratively with other subject departments in the school.

- Good progress has been made in developing junior cycle units of learning. The templates shared by the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) team were utilised and it is positive that learning outcomes have been unpacked in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills and values. In some instances, there is scope to further unpack learning outcomes to explicitly plan for students to incrementally develop skills including practical, procedural and key skills.
- Leaving Certificate planning documents include content to be covered, hyperlinks to resources and assessment questions. To further support an integrated approach to students' learning, consideration should be given to the adjusting the sequence of content taught.
- A TY plan has been devised but it could provide more opportunities for students who have already studied the subject in junior cycle to be appropriately challenged. The plan should be revised so that all students are enabled to progress their learning.

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

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcome the acknowledgement of the highly commendable links established by the Home Economics department with local social enterprises and the commendable engagement with Continuing Professional Development at an international level. In addition, the Board note the very respectful interactions between students and teachers in supporting a cooperative learning environment in lessons where students were motivated to engage.

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

The Board of Management along with the senior management team will support the Home Economics department in implementing the recommendations.

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 quality of 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 *very good* 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;