An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Home Economics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	De La Salle College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Castleblaney Road Dundalk County Louth
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	63891T

Date of Inspection: 20-10-2017

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

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 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.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	19-10-2017 & 20-10-2017
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students	• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

De La Salle College, Dundalk is a voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 712 students. The school provides a broad curriculum including, the Junior Certificate, optional Transition Year (TY), and Leaving Certificate programmes, as well as the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme. Home Economics is provided as an optional subject at Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate levels, and as a core component of TY.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good, with some very effective practice noted.
- There is scope to enhance the depth of students' learning through more strategic use of some teaching and assessment approaches.
- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for Home Economics is very good; some health and safety procedures need to be formalised.
- Very good progress has been made in implementing recommendations from a previous inspection of Home Economics.
- The overall quality of teachers' collaborative practice is very good; some aspects of TY planning need development.
- Successful self-evaluation practices are evolving within the home economics department.

Recommendations

- Strategies to support the development of students' higher-order thinking skills should be integrated further into teaching and assessment practices in Home Economics.
- The whole-school health and safety policy should be amended to include a risk assessment of the specialist facilities for Home Economics.
- The assessment framework for TY Home Economics should be further developed.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good, with some very effective practice noted.
- Learning activities were well managed, with a very good rapport evident in lessons. Teachers' levels of enthusiasm and specialist knowledge prompted successful student engagement.
- Some highly effective practice was noted in the selection of resources and the range of teaching approaches chosen for lessons. On occasion, there was scope to adjust the pace and the pitch of planned activities to deepen learning.
- Learning intentions were shared with students in all lessons. This strategy supported highly effective learner experiences when the intentions were phrased in terms of what students should be able to do, and when these intentions were revisited to assess learning.
- Exemplar materials, digital media, and think, pair, and share activities were used effectively to support learning. Highly effective learning was noted when sufficient plenary time was given to challenge students to think deeply and process the information from planned tasks.
- Students displayed a good range of procedural and culinary skills. Students' self-management skills were very well supported through the teaching approaches used. Some very good use was made of spot demonstrations to model key food preparation processes. Maximum use should be made of this approach in all practical lessons, to model best practice and refine students' skills. To facilitate highly effective learner outcomes relevant stages of the design brief process should be planned as integral components of practical lessons.
- Questioning was a popular formative assessment strategy. In some instances, questions tended to be lower-order, requiring brief answers. Further use of higher-order questions with increased wait time is recommended.
- Some very good constructive feedback was noted on students' written work. This practice should be further developed. The feedback sheet used for summative assessments is a commendable initiative. Strategies that encourage students to reflect on their progress and use the feedback provided needs consideration.
- A review of in-house examination papers and student copybooks indicates a need to extend the range of questions and written activities undertaken by students. This will provide additional challenge and further support students' higher-order thinking. The range of written work assigned and pitch of written examination papers set should be reviewed to provide further challenge and support the development and assessment students' analytical and evaluative skills.
- Purposeful efforts are made to create print-rich learning environments. Displays of completed student work are also showcased to model best practice.
- Observation of students' practical coursework in the area of design and craftwork indicates good levels of creativity. Highly effective learner outcomes were noted when the craft items completed provided opportunities to demonstrate sufficient skill complexity.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support for Home Economics is very good. Students have very good access to the subject. Option bands are based on students' preferences and uptake of Home Economics is good.
- In almost all instances timetabled allocation for Home Economics is in line with syllabus guidelines, with a good spread of lessons throughout the week. In the context of future timetabling, priority should be given to facilitating optimal timetabling arrangements for examination classes.
- LCA is a valuable curriculum programme provided in the school. The feasibility of re-introducing Hotel, Catering and Tourism, as either an elective or vocational specialism should be considered.
- The home economics team comprises two very committed subject specialists. There is a very good level of engagement with continuing professional development (CPD). Very effective arrangements are in place to ensure smooth transitions at times of staff changeover.
- The specialist rooms are well maintained and resourced, and good health and safety routines are apparent. It was noted that risk assessments of the home economics rooms are not included in the whole-school health and safety statement and this should be addressed. The templates should include the full range of activities undertaken in home economics lessons.
- Recommendations from a previous subject inspection of Home Economics have been very well progressed by senior management and the home economics department.
- The home economics team organises a very good range of co-curricular activities. These activities enable participating students to apply their learning to contexts outside of the classroom as well as create a positive profile for Home Economics in the school.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of teachers' collaborative practice is very good. Subject department planning is well established, and co-ordinated in an enthusiastic and informed manner.
- Successful self-evaluation practices, focusing on continuous improvement in teaching and learning, are evolving within the home economics department. Whole-school priorities in the areas of literacy and numeracy are well integrated into lessons. The success of these strategies should now be evaluated.
- Student outcomes in the certificate examinations are analysed regularly. This data has been used to inform very effective revisions to planning for practical coursework. As a next step, it would be useful for the team to review trends in student outcomes, in association with relevant chief examiners' reports. This will inform the next teaching and learning priorities.
- Programme plans have been developed. These should be reviewed to provide an enhanced integrated and incremental approach to learning in Home Economics.
- Planning for differentiation and assessment in TY Home Economics needs development. Learning outcomes should be incorporated into the plan that appropriately cater for the needs of students who have not studied Home Economics previously, while also providing appropriate challenge for those who have. Assessment criteria should also be developed. These criteria should be aligned to the key skills being developed and inform the subsequent feedback provided to students.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers 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 accepts the findings of the report.

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 whole-school health and safety policy has been amended to include a risk assessment of the specialist facilities for Home Economics.

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 *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;