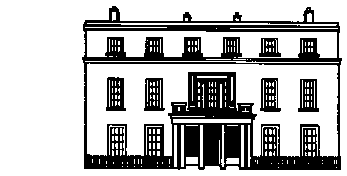
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Home Economics
REPORT

Saint Bricin's College
Belturbet, County Cavan
Roll number: 70350W

Date of inspection: 11 November 2015



REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HOME ECONOMICS

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	11 November 2015
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and teacher • Interaction with students	• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- Some good-quality teaching and learning was observed during the evaluation but planning for the Leaving Certificate Applied course in Hotel, Catering and Tourism (HCT) needs to be enhanced.
- Very good attention was paid to ensuring that students understood and used key terminology.
- A very good rapport was evident between students and their class teacher; good classroom routines are being established.
- Some very good formative assessment practice is evident in Home Economics.
- Home Economics benefits from a good level of provision and whole-school support.
- The overall quality of planning and preparation is good but some programme plans need further development.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Planning for lessons in HCT should be reviewed and a programme plan developed to ensure that lessons are closely aligned to syllabus specifications and support incremental learning.
- Assessment practices should be extended to include peer-assessment and self-assessment opportunities, and to provide for the summative assessment of practical coursework components.
- An annual stock-take should inform the on-going replacement of equipment and the health and safety statement should be expanded to take account of the multi-functionality of the home economics room.
- Trends in student attainment should be used to inform on-going developments in teaching and learning in Home Economics.

INTRODUCTION

Saint Bricin's College is a co-educational school under the auspices of Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board (CMETB). The school provides a very broad range of curricular programmes, given the size of its cohort of 248 students. Home Economics is provided as an optional subject in the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes. The subject is a core component of the Transition Year (TY) programme while Hotel, Catering and Tourism (HCT) is an elective in the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Some good-quality teaching and learning was noted during the evaluation.
- Preparation for almost all lessons observed was good. However, planning for HCT in LCA needs to be re-examined to ensure that lessons are pitched and paced appropriately. It is recommended that planning for HCT be reviewed in order to align lesson content closely to syllabus specifications and to support high-quality incremental learning.
- Learning intentions were shared with students from the outset of all lessons. This proved effective in focusing students on their learning. Time should be taken during lessons to revisit the learning intentions to assess students' understanding and to provide additional clarifications.
- Explanations of new content were clear, with very good links made with previous learning. Some good use was made of additional resources to scaffold learning. The further use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning should be considered.
- Very good attention was paid to ensuring that students understood and used key terminology. It is particularly commendable that key language skills to support students in evaluating their practical coursework are being developed.
- Some good use was made of strategies that encouraged students to engage actively with lesson materials. Occasionally, there was scope to adjust the balance between teacher-led and student-led activities. Teaching strategies that facilitate peer learning should be integrated further into lessons. In this context, the appropriateness of formal demonstration as a teaching strategy should be re-considered.
- A very good rapport was evident between students and their class teacher. Good classroom routines are being established. Observation of student notebooks indicated some very good practice. Very good procedural practices were also noted in students' Leaving Certificate coursework journals. However, there is a need to review how LCA students record their learning in HCT.
- In the lessons observed, students were well able to work individually and in groups. While a satisfactory range of practical skills was evident, additional strategies should be incorporated into practical lessons to refine students' culinary and procedural skills.
- Some very good formative assessment practices were evident. Students' learning in lessons was assessed through effective questioning and strategies that encouraged students to reflect on their progress. A very good range of homework is assigned with some effective monitoring of work apparent. It is recommended that peer and self-assessment opportunities be used to support and refine learning from written assignments.

- There is scope to extend the range of assessment modes used in summative examinations. It is recommended that the assessment modes be extended to include an examination of the relevant practical coursework component and to provide for an overall aggregated mark of student attainment.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Home Economics benefits from a good level of provision and whole-school support. Timetabled provision is in line with syllabus recommendations.
- There is very good access to Home Economics. Option bands are informed by students' preferences. The short first-year taster programme, as well as subject sampling in TY, assists students to make informed subject choices. Uptake of Home Economics is very good.
- There is one specialist room for Home Economics. While the room is well maintained, a shortage of some equipment was reported during the evaluation. It is recommended that an annual audit of stock be completed in order to facilitate the on-going replacement of equipment. The bulk purchase of dry stocks should also be investigated.
- The home economics health and safety policy needs to be extended to account for the fact that the room hosts practical lessons in textiles and food studies, as well as theory lessons. It is recommended that the policy be further developed to take account of the multi-functionality of the room.
- The current home economics teacher is recently appointed and has a clear vision for the development of the subject department. While there has been a good level of engagement with continuing professional development (CPD), it would be useful now to access some subject-specific CPD with respect to the LCA programme.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning and preparation is good.
- Programme plans for Junior and Leaving Certificate are well advanced. Reflective practice is clearly evident. At the next review stage, the effectiveness of the lesson sequences in optimising incremental learning should be assessed. Strategies that facilitate stages of the design brief process to be completed in tandem with the practical coursework items made should also be considered.
- Assessment practice in TY should be further developed. It is recommended that assessment criteria are developed for each assessment component. These criteria should be informed by the overarching set of key skills being developed in TY Home Economics. The assessment criteria should inform the feedback provided to students on completed tasks.
- A programme plan for HCT was not available at the time of the evaluation. It is recommended that a programme plan be devised as a matter of priority.
- It is commendable that the subject department has analysed trends in student attainment. It is recommended that the trends identified from an analysis of attainment in the in-house and certificate examinations be used to devise specific strategies to inform on-going developments in teaching and learning in Home Economics.

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 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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