

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Home Economics
REPORT**

**Ardgillan Community College
Balbriggan, County Dublin
Roll number: 76129H**

Date of inspection: 26 March 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

Dates of inspection	25 & 26 March
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good to very good, with some very good practice noted in all lessons.
- Teachers have high expectations of their students and a very good rapport was evident in all of the lessons observed.
- Some good formative and summative assessment practice is evident but there is scope to extend the range of question styles and written activities assigned.
- Commendable efforts are made to establish Home Economics as a high profile and popular optional subject in the school.
- There is a clear connection between the work at subject-department level and the whole-school priorities in literacy and school self-evaluation (SSE).
- Programmes of work are well advanced but there is a need to foster a more integrated and incremental approach to learning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The home economics team should identify the key literacy competencies that can be supported in Home Economics and agree teaching strategies to support their development.
 - The range of written activities assigned should be extended to develop students' analytical and evaluation skills.
 - Programme plans should be reviewed to further support an integrated and incremental approach to learning and the integration of the design brief process from first year.
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INTRODUCTION

Ardgillan Community College is a co-educational school under the auspices of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board. The school opened in 2009 and has a current enrolment of 539 students. The first cohort of students is due to complete the Leaving Certificate in June 2015. Home Economics is provided as an optional Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate subject and is a core component of the optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good to very good, with some very good practice noted in all lessons.
- Good quality planning, which included the selection of additional resources, was evident for all lessons. At times there was scope to adjust the pace or sequence of lessons to enhance the incremental and integrated approach to learning underpinning the home economics syllabuses.
- Learning outcomes were shared in all lessons. Very good practice was noted in those lessons where the outcomes explicitly stated the intended knowledge and skills to be acquired. Outcomes should be re-visited to assess students' understanding of lesson content and to provide opportunities to clarify points of information.
- Teachers displayed a very good level of subject knowledge. Explanations were clear and students' understanding was enhanced through the good use of additional resources. In some lessons there was scope to incorporate further student-led activities to facilitate deeper understanding, integration, assimilation and application of lesson concepts. It is recommended that teaching strategies that facilitate such peer collaboration be explored and integrated into lessons.
- Some good attention to supporting students' literacy was noted in lessons. Deliberate emphasis was placed on ensuring that students understood and used key subject-specific terminology. It is recommended that the teaching team reviews the home economics syllabuses to identify other core literacy competencies that can be supported in lessons. Subsequent teaching strategies should be agreed for implementation with all classes.
- Teachers have high expectations of their students and deliberate efforts are made to encourage independent learning and a sense of personal responsibility for the completion of project work.
- A very good rapport was evident in all of the lessons observed. A very good range of positive behaviour strategies are implemented to acknowledge and celebrate student effort.
- Students are making good progress in Home Economics. Participation rates at higher level in the Junior Certificate examination is very good.
- It was noted positively that stages of the design brief process are now an integral part of first year textiles but there is scope to enhance this practice. It is recommended that further strategies to integrate the design brief process into practical food and textile studies, from first year be implemented. This would allow the completion of practical coursework to focus on the acquisition and development of analytical, procedural and evaluative skills, as well as manipulative skills and theoretical knowledge.

- Commendably, summative assessment practices include an examination of all of the relevant practical coursework components. Homework is regularly assigned. A review of student copybooks and some in-house examination papers indicated that there is scope to extend the range of question styles used and written activities undertaken. It is recommended that the range of written work assigned be extended to support the development of students' analytical and evaluative skills.
- Some very good monitoring of students' written work was evident. Best practice was in instances where written comments appropriately affirmed progress and provided guidance for improvement. There is scope to extend the use of the feedback cover sheets and other agreed formative assessment strategies to optimise student learning.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is a very good level of subject provision and whole-school support for Home Economics. Timetabled provision is in line with syllabus guidelines. In almost all instances the distribution of class time across the teaching week facilitates good continuity in teaching and learning.
- Students have very good access to the subject. Student uptake is very good with a commendable gender balance apparent.
- The department is well resourced, with an additional two specialist rooms near completion. Health and safety procedures are well established. The risk assessment should be extended to take cognisance of the fact that the kitchen is also used for practical textile lessons.
- The home economics team comprises two committed and enthusiastic subject specialists. The subject co-ordinator has played a significant role in establishing the subject department and in creating a high profile for Home Economics.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department planning is well established with significant progress made in the short time since the school was established. There is a clear connection between the work at subject-department level and the whole-school priorities in literacy and school self-evaluation (SSE).
- SEE practice is well established in Home Economics through the use of student feedback surveys and peer observation. Relevant evaluation criteria in the *School Self-Evaluation, Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools* should be used to inform feedback from peer observation. Findings from the analysis of trends in student attainment in the certificate examinations and findings from the relevant chief examiners reports should inform on-going developments in teaching and learning in Home Economics.
- Programmes of work are well advanced but modifications are necessary to the lesson sequence and range of practical coursework work completed to promote a more integrated and incremental approach to the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills. It is recommended that programme plans be reviewed to support this integrated and incremental approach to the teaching and learning. Particular attention should focus on the sequence and pace of the completion of Leaving Certificate coursework assignments.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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