

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Home Economics
REPORT

Mulroy College
Milford, County Donegal
Roll number: 712200

Date of inspection: 11 March 2016



AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HOME ECONOMICS**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date(s) of inspection	10 & 11 March 2016
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 very good in all of the lessons observed.
- Learning activities were well managed, with teachers acutely aware of the learning needs of individual students.
- Very good use is being made of information and communications technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning in Home Economics.
- Some very good assessment practices are implemented in Home Economics.
- A highly commendable variety of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities supports achievement in, and enjoyment of, Home Economics.
- A high level of reflective practice underpins subject planning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The success of the current agreed strategies to support literacy and numeracy in Home Economics should be evaluated to inform the next phase of subject-department planning.
 - The subject team should use the outcomes of the analysis of its data trends to devise an action plan that identifies specific targets and strategies for the next phase of subject planning.
 - Programme plans for Transition Year (TY) Home Economics and Hotel, Catering and Tourism (HCT) should be developed further, as outlined in the report.
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INTRODUCTION

Mulroy College is a co-educational school under the auspices of Donegal Education and Training Board. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department's action plan for educational inclusion, and it offers the full range of curricular programmes. Home Economics is an optional subject at junior and senior cycle, and is a core component of TY. HCT is provided as part the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good in all of the lessons observed.
- The quality of advance planning and preparation for lessons was very good. Additional resources were well chosen and prepared. Very good use is being made of information and communications technology (ICT), including a web-based classroom platform, to support teaching and learning in Home Economics.
- Learning activities were well managed, with a very good rapport evident between teachers and their students. Teachers were acutely aware of the learning needs of individual students and provided differentiated support in an inclusive manner.
- Lessons begin by sharing clear intended learning outcomes with students. This strategy was most effective when the learning intentions were phrased in terms of what students should know and be able to do by the end of the lesson. Time should be taken in all lessons to re-visit the planned outcomes to assess students' deep understanding of lesson content and to clarify points of information.
- Teacher explanations were clear and accurate, with a conscious effort made to ensure that students understood new concepts. Some very good use was made of student-led activities to facilitate detailed discussions of complex lesson concepts.
- Electronic presentations containing high-quality visuals proved effective in clarifying lesson concepts and linking the content with students' own experiences. Further consideration is needed on how students record information from electronic presentations. Consideration should be given to developing students' note-making skills, as opposed to note-taking skills, to make optimal use of class time and further encourage active learning.
- Students displayed a very good range of procedural and culinary skills in the practical lessons observed. Some very good use was made of spot demonstrations to model key food preparation processes and to integrate relevant theoretical information. Optimal use should be made of this approach in all practical lessons. It is commendable that literacy skills that support students in evaluating their work are being overtly developed.
- The home economics team has implemented a range of agreed strategies to develop students' competences in using subject-specific terminology. Teachers are actively supporting numeracy, in accordance with the whole-school priority targets. Strategies should now be devised to evaluate the effectiveness of the various approaches used in lessons. This would complement whole-school efforts in monitoring progress and inform the next phase of subject planning.
- Assessment of students' learning was an integral part of all of the lessons observed. The quality of oral feedback provided to students served to maintain the high expectations set for achievement. Some very good use of questioning was noted. Best practice was

evident when students were encouraged to develop detailed answers and to apply and analyse information.

- Students are making very good progress in Home Economics. Students' notebooks were very well organised, with very good use of the agreed comment-marking strategies noted. Students' practical design and craftwork coursework indicated high levels of creativity and expertise in craft and textile skills.
- A very good range of assessment modes is used for the in-house examinations. There is scope to adjust the pitch of some written papers by extending the range of question styles to assess a wider range of higher-order skills. Very good practice was noted in the use of the Junior Certificate School Programme learning statements for Home Economics.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for Home Economics is very good.
- The teaching team provides a highly commendable variety of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities to support achievement in, and enjoyment of, Home Economics. This approach heightens the profile of the subject. Deliberate efforts should continue to promote Home Economics as a viable option for all students.
- Timetabled provision is in line with syllabus requirements. There is scope to enhance the spread of lessons across the teaching week, by avoiding timetabling classes which only have two double lessons over two consecutive days.
- The home economics team comprises two very committed and enthusiastic subject specialists. Members have actively engaged with a wide range of continuing professional development (CPD). This is impacting very positively on the quality of teaching and learning provided in Home Economics.
- The specialist rooms are very well resourced and maintained as vibrant learning environments. Displays of student work promote high expectations for student achievement. Students are supplied with all ingredients for practical lessons; this highly commendable practice exemplifies the inclusive ethos evident within the school.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department planning is very well established and closely aligned to and informed by the school's DEIS priorities.
- High-quality reflective practice is evident with self-evaluation processes including the administration of student surveys, well established in Home Economics. Data from the certificate examinations is analysed. A deeper level of analysis of trends would prove beneficial. The subject team should use the outcomes of the analysis of its data to devise an action plan that identifies specific targets for the next phase of subject department planning.
- Programme plans are well developed. The TY plan provides for very good differentiation. There is scope to develop TY assessment planning by incorporating assessment criteria into the plan. These criteria should be underpinned by the overarching

key skills being developed, inform the modes of assessment deployed, and provide the basis for student feedback.

- Very good levels of differentiation are evident in planning for the completion of key assignments in HCT. The programme plan should be used as a working document to develop differentiated learning intentions for each area and provide greater opportunity to identify specific outcomes for the full range of learner abilities.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and home economics teachers 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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board wishes to acknowledge the very positive report following the subject inspection in Home Economics. It particularly notes the overall high quality of teaching and learning in the subject, the very good rapport evident between students and their teachers and also the quality of advance planning and preparations for lessons. The Board also acknowledges that the report commends the Home Economics department for their use of ICT in the classroom, their assessment practices, the variety of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities and the high level of reflective practice that underpins subject planning.

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