



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Home Economics Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Dominican College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Dominican College Sion Hill Cross Avenue Blackrock
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	60070K
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	26-04-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	12/06/2023

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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> 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 <i>Procedures</i>) 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.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	25-04-2023 and 26-04-2023
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students, including focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

The focus of this subject inspection was on Junior Cycle Home Economics only.

School context

Dominican College is a voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 498 female students. It operates under the trusteeship of the Le Chéile Schools Trust. The school provides the Junior Cycle (JC), a compulsory Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate. Home Economics is offered as an optional subject in JC.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good and lessons ranged in quality from very good to good.
- Home Economics is a very popular junior cycle subject; teachers have been actively promoting the subject through an after-school cookery club.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole school support was very good.
- The overall quality of subject planning and preparation was appropriate with some effective practice evident.
- Teachers written reflections on junior cycle units of learning, in addition to their observations about students' learning discussed during the subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) meetings, were used to inform future planning and this is commendable.

Recommendations

- Teachers should increase the frequency of written formative feedback on students' work and extend the good practice observed in some copybooks whereby students record the oral formative feedback provided to them in lessons.
- Teachers should undertake a review of the planned units of learning to seek further opportunities to plan for a thematic and integrated approach to students' learning. The assessment tasks agreed at subject department level should be aligned to the intended learning outcomes.
- Teachers should plan for and deliver additional food studies practical lessons so that students are provided with greater opportunities to incrementally develop a range of food studies practical skills and skills associated with the design brief process throughout the three years of junior cycle.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good and lessons ranged in quality from very good to good.
- In the lessons observed, teachers set and shared high expectations for students. Students engaged meaningfully in their learning and in a very productive and purposeful manner.
- Relationships and interactions in classrooms created very positive and affirming learning environments. During discussions with students, they shared that they felt confident asking their teacher or peers for help, if needed, in lessons.
- Teachers presented lessons with clear learning intentions and associated success criteria. Learning intentions were revisited during the lesson and at the end of lessons.
- Good quality task design ensured learning and assessment were aligned. In all lessons, some whole-class multiple choice assessment tasks and paired student assessment tasks were designed to assess students' attainment of the intended learning. Teachers monitored the students at work, providing feedback where necessary.
- In some lessons, while the students were on task, additional questions were asked by the teacher that provided whole-class opportunities for students to articulate their learning. This further consolidated students' learning. This good practice merits extension, where possible.
- As a way of working in lessons, teachers stimulated students' thinking by requiring them to recall what they already knew about the new topic. This helped to scaffold learning and supported students to see links between previous learning and intended learning.
- At times, as students completed tasks, it was evident that additional opportunities for students to develop their food studies practical skills would be beneficial. This would support them in making more connections across their learning in the subject.
- Teachers strategically selected and used a good range of purposeful learning activities which were aligned to the intended learning and key skill development, especially including the key skills 'working with others' and 'managing information and thinking'.
- During a focus group discussion, students shared that they highly valued opportunities to work collaboratively as these enhanced their learning. Students also recognised the opportunities provided for them to undertake research tasks and could name reliable websites linked to Home Economics which they had used to access information.
- Information and communications technology was used effectively by all teachers to engage students and to enhance their understanding of more complex concepts. In some lessons, teachers set a task for students to consider whilst watching a short and apt video clip. In focus group discussions, student spoke of the effectiveness of such approaches in enabling them to visualise and aid their understanding of difficult concepts.
- In most lessons, key words were shared with students. Best practice evident when these words were discussed, revisited and students understanding of the shared terms was assessed.
- Very good practice was evident when students co-generated success criteria with the teacher for an assigned homework task.
- Students and parents were provided with feedback on key tasks and students' progress in examinations through regular school reports and in many instances this feedback was formative.
- There was scope for more regular written formative feedback to be provided by teachers on students' work. At times in students' copybooks a stamp indicated that the teacher had provided oral formative feedback to the student and on occasion this feedback was recorded by the student. Teachers should encourage students to record such feedback on an ongoing basis to support understanding and the consolidation of learning.

- In the lessons observed, students were provided with an opportunity to reflect on their learning and to assess their progress and areas for development as learners. This is very good practice.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole school support for Home Economics was very good.
- All teachers were deployed to teach the subject in each of the three-years of junior cycle and this supports teacher collaboration.
- Two subject specialist classrooms, a kitchen and a textiles room, were available for home economics lessons. The school has plans in place to upgrade the home economics kitchen in the coming months. It is highly commendable that the board of management is making this investment to provide optimum learning spaces for students.
- A risk assessment was in place for the home economics facilities. There was scope for some additional hazards to be identified and added to the risk assessment.
- Students have been given very good access to the subject. The usual approach has been to generate subject option bands based on student preferences.
- Home Economics is usually a very popular junior cycle subject in the school. Teachers have been actively promoting the subject for example, through an after-school cookery club which is offered to all students.
- Teachers were aware of students with special educational needs (SEN). It is positive that a template is being used by teachers to support them in planning inclusive lessons for students with SEN.
- Teachers have been very well supported by the board of management and senior management to engage in continuing professional development and teachers are facilitated to work as examiners for the State Examinations Commission.
- It is commendable that teachers have been facilitated to share teaching and learning practices in the school. A home economics teacher is due to share their learning with their colleagues in an upcoming 'Teach meet' session.
- SLAR meetings were conducted in line with the provisions of Circular 59/2021, with systems in place to ensure that finalised classroom-based assessments grade descriptors have been uploaded to the departments online database.

3. Planning and preparation

- The overall quality of subject planning and preparation was appropriate with some effective practice evident.
- Teachers share digital resources, design common examination papers and have collaboratively designed units of learning, and this was good practice.
- Within the subject plan, some food studies practical lessons are planned for in junior cycle and most of these lessons planned for in third year. It is recommended that additional food studies practical lessons should be planned for and delivered so that students are provided with greater opportunities to incrementally develop a range of food studies practical skills and skills associated with the design brief process throughout the three years of junior cycle.
- It was evident that teachers have been reflecting on their experiences of teaching units of learning and observations are recorded. Professional discussions held between teachers during SLAR meetings have identified some aspects of students' learning which could be further supported and it is commendable that teachers are implementing strategies to enhance students' learning.
- It is positive that units of learning, inclusive of learning outcomes, have been prepared and agreed for all junior cycle year groups. It is now timely for teachers to engage in a review of collectively these units of learning to further to strengthen the integrated and

thematic approach to students' learning. This could be achieved by planning units of learning which are inclusive of learning outcomes from more than one strand.

- Assessment tasks were recorded in the planned units of learning and in many instances, these were general rather than aligned to specific learning outcomes. To further support teachers in making informed decisions about students' progress in achieving the learning outcome in the specification, greater alignment should be reached between the chosen learning outcomes in units of learning and the agreed assessment tasks.

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 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	<i>Very good</i> 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 <i>outstanding</i> 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	<i>Good</i> 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 <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	<i>Satisfactory</i> 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	<i>Fair</i> 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	<i>Weak</i> 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;