An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Home Economics
Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Swords Community College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Broadmeadows Rathbeale Road Swords
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	76475D
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	04-10-2022

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; a response was not received from the board.

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:	
Child Protection	*Anti-bullying*
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.	1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)* 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 *Procedures*) 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.

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

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	04-10-2022
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students	• Observation of teaching and learning during 4 lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

School context

Swords Community College is a co-educational, multi-denominational school under the patronage of Dublin & Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). The school was established in 2018 and has a current enrolment of 749 students. The school currently provides the Junior Cycle, Transition Year and established Leaving Certificate programmes. Home Economics is provided as an optional Junior Cycle subject and as module in the Transition Year (TY) programme.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good overall, with some very good teaching and formative assessment approaches noted.
- Students were motivated to learn and demonstrated high levels of interest in making progress; classroom interactions were affirming, respectful and re-assuring.
- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for Home Economics is good.
- The newly-formed home economics team has developed a very good range of co-curricular activities in this academic year.
- High-quality specialist home economics facilities are available and are being developed as vibrant learning environments.
- The overall quality of preparation and planning observed for Home Economics was good, with some highly-effective collaborative planning practices in operation.

Recommendations

- To support the development of students' higher-order critical thinking skills, the range of written tasks assigned in lessons should be extended to provide students with additional opportunities to analyse and interpret data, or to apply and reflect on their learning.
- As the new specialist facilities are now in operation, the home economics teachers, in collaboration with senior management, should develop the health and safety risk assessments for Home Economics to take cognisance of the full range of learning activities taking place in each specialist room.
- To support the implementation of the Junior Cycle Home Economics, the home economics team should further develop the units of learning to facilitate an enhanced incremental and integrated approach to learning across relevant strands and elements of the specification.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good overall, with some very good practice apparent.
- All lessons took place in a positive and student-centred learning environment. Students were motivated to learn and demonstrated high levels of interest in making progress. All interactions were affirming, respectful and re-assuring.
- Learning intentions were shared at the outset of all lessons. In most instances the intentions were very well planned and phrased in terms of what students should know and be able to do by the end of the lesson.
- On occasion there was scope to adjust the pitch of lesson content or activities to a level more commensurate with the age and stage of learners. To support highly-effective learning, the planned lesson sequence should take due cognisance of students' prior learning or experience to provide for deep developmental learning.
- Teacher explanations of new content were very clear overall, with very good attention to supporting students' literacy skills and reinforcing key concepts. Some very good practice was noted in the design of visual resources and the use of digital media to support students' understanding and to facilitate active and differentiated learning.
- Given that students now have access to copies of class resources through the school's digital platform, the practice of students transcribing information from presentations during class time should be reviewed. The further use of note-making, as opposed to note-taking strategies, should be considered.
- In all lessons observed, students were facilitated to actively engage and contribute to lesson content. Questioning strategies were very well used throughout all lessons to check understanding and elicit sufficiently-detailed responses from students.
- Group work and pair work were well managed. Student learning was highly effective in instances where the task assigned was appropriately pitched and built on prior learning. This facilitated learners to engage deeply with lesson material.
- In the practical food studies lesson observed, highly-effective teaching approaches were in evidence. Spot demonstrations were used very effectively to model and refine key procedural and practical skills. Good links were made with relevant theoretical knowledge. Students responded well to this approach and were well able to work on their own and in pairs.
- Despite the best efforts of the home economics teacher and students, the quality of learner experiences and outcomes in practical food-studies lessons was impeded by the length of lesson period. In the practical lesson observed there was insufficient time for students to complete set-up tasks during class time and no plenary class time was available for students to evaluate the completed task. The impact of these arrangements on the quality of learner experiences and outcomes needs to be kept under review by school management and the home economics team.
- The home economics team is developing a very good system to support students to manage and store their information and record their learning from lessons. Homework is regularly assigned and well monitored. It is very good practice that students are being supported to incrementally develop their skills of evaluation of their progress in practical food studies.
- A review of student copybooks indicated that there is scope for the home economics team to extend the range of written tasks assigned to provide additional opportunities for

students to develop the higher-order skills of analysis and interpretation of data or to apply and reflect on their learning.

2. Subject provision and whole-school support

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for Home Economics was good. It is good practice that option bands are generated from an initial survey of student preferences. The first-year taster programme has been discontinued. This decision is being kept under review by school management.
- Uptake of Junior Cycle Home Economics has been increasing and student participation rates were good. Leaving Certificate Home Economics was not provided in the current academic year due to a lack of student demand. School management, in collaboration with the home economics team, should continue to devise strategies which would support the establishment of the subject within the school's Leaving Certificate programme.
- The newly-formed home economics team comprised two subject specialists. There was a commendable blend of experience and expertise among the team members. The team was making deliberate efforts to raise the profile of the subject in the school by providing a very good range of co-curricular activities in the current academic year. The operation of new Craft and Cookery Clubs enables participating students to apply their learning to contexts outside of the classroom.
- Timetabled provision for Junior Cycle Home Economics was adequate. The subject was timetabled for two one-hour lessons per week in each year of junior cycle. This arrangement provided the minimum of 200 hours tuition time, in accordance with Junior Cycle Home Economics specification. However, the one-hour lesson length was presenting significant challenges for teachers and their students in facilitating in highly-effective practical food studies lessons.
- The necessary level of planning required by students in advance of the practical lesson was impacting on their access to break-time and places additional supervision requirements on staff, as students must be supervised at all times when in specialist rooms. These timetabling arrangements need close monitoring.
- The school community is settling into its new school building. High-quality specialist facilities and resources are available for Home Economics. The home economics teachers were developing these rooms as vibrant learning environments.
- A health and safety policy has been developed for Home Economics, as part of the whole-school safety statement. As the three new specialist rooms are now in operation, the risk assessment template currently used for Home Economics should be further developed to take cognisance of the full range of learning activities in each specialist home economics room. The arrangements for students using the specialist rooms outside of class time also needs to be included in the risk assessments.

3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of preparation and planning for Home Economics was good overall, with some highly-effective collaborative and reflective planning practices noted during the evaluation. There was good communication between home economics teachers and the special education needs team to facilitate planning for students who required additional support.
- In the current academic year, the home economics team was making very good use of the school's virtual learning platform to share resources and collaboratively develop common programmes of work. There was a clear link between the work of the home economics team and the school's school self-evaluation (SSE) priorities.

- It is good practice that students' views inform programme planning. To support the next stage of programme planning, the home economics team should strategically review the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on students' learning and assess if there is a need to further adjust the sequence of learning activities in established programme plans.
- The home economics team has begun to collaboratively plan for Junior Cycle Home Economics, with units of learning in the early stages of development. This is a commendable initiative and good progress has been achieved in a short time.
- A review of current Junior Cycle plans indicated that the sequence of planned lessons was overly reliant on the students' textbooks. Units of learning, which demonstrate an incremental and integrated approach to learning across relevant strands and elements of the Junior Cycle Home Economics specification should be developed on a phased basis by the teaching team. In particular the first-year plan should include a unit of learning in the area of Textiles.
- A commendable range of learner experiences underpinned the TY Home Economics module. As a next step, a set of overarching learning outcomes which outline the key theoretical, procedural and practical knowledge to be acquired should be incorporated into the plan. An assessment framework which includes success criteria for each examinable component should be developed.

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	*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;