An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Home Economics
Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Christian Brothers College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Monkstown Park Dun Laoghaire Co Dublin
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	60180R
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	17/09/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	08/11/2024

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.

Included in this subject inspection report is a student-friendly page that provides information for the children/young people in your school about the inspection that occurred recently. It outlines for them some of the main findings and recommendations.

The board of management of the school 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.

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

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Child Protection</td><td>Anti-bullying</td></tr>
<tr><td>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.</td><td>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) or Bí Cineálta (2024) and this policy is reviewed annually.
2. The school's current anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and students.</td></tr>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Subject inspection

Dates of inspection	16/09/2024 and 17/09/2024
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students, including focus groups	• Observation of teaching and learning during three lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Christian Brothers College is a fee-charging secondary school for boys with a current enrolment of 564 students. The school provides the Junior Cycle (JC), an optional Transition Year (TY) programme and the Leaving Certificate (LC) programme. Home Economics is provided as an optional JC and LC subject. In TY, the subject is provided as a module for all students.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good.
- It was very positive that learners had opportunities to be active in their learning and to work collaboratively.
- It was good that clear learning intentions were effectively shared with students, though formative assessment required improvement.
- In the focus group discussion, students shared that they enjoyed their learning in the subject, especially when teachers made lesson content very relatable to their lives.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole school support was good.
- The overall quality of subject planning was good with some very good practice noted; LC programme plans supported an integrated approach to students' learning.

Recommendations

- In most lessons, activities and questions could have provided greater challenges for students; teachers should consider prior learning when planning lessons to ensure appropriate, especially upward, challenges for all students.
- To enhance learner outcomes in food studies practical lessons, students should work in smaller groups. The senior management team, in conjunction with the home economics department, should develop a resourcing plan to provide equipment for additional workstations.
- Formative assessment was identified as an area for development; teachers should provide further opportunities for regular whole-class assessment, peer and self-assessment, and written formative feedback.
- Junior Cycle units of learning have been developed. However, the subject department should plan in greater detail for the incremental development of students' practical food studies skills, and to align assessment tasks more closely with the action verbs in the intended learning outcomes.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- A positive rapport was noted between students and teachers. Teachers were enthusiastic about teaching the subject.
- Teachers had prepared a range of well-designed resources aligned with the intended learning. As part of lesson activities, students investigated food packaging and products, which enabled active learning. In focus group discussions, students expressed that they valued these experiences, as they made their learning more relatable to real life.
- In lessons, teachers shared clear learning intentions with students, which underpinned the lessons. In most lessons observed, students were given time to reflect on their progress and this was good practice.
- While some assessment of the intended learning occurred, this was identified as an area for improvement in lessons. Additionally, there was potential to provide students with opportunities to recap their previous learning, which would support continuity, consolidate understanding and identify potential learning gaps.
- Overall, teachers' use of questioning was effective. Best practice was evident when questions were well-distributed, teachers encouraged students to articulate their learning by developing their answers, and students were invited to answer questions raised by their peers.
- Teachers effectively utilised digital technology by using visually rich digital presentations, sharing relevant digital clips, and providing additional resources on the school's digital platform for students. During the focus group discussion, students expressed that they would enjoy more opportunities to use digital technology to support their learning in lessons, particularly to aid in the assessment of learning.
- In lessons, it was good that students had opportunities to work collaboratively. In the focus group, students recognised the benefits of collaborative learning as a means of developing the key skill of working with others. Collaborative tasks, including group work and paired activities, were clearly explained by teachers, with effective practice evident when clear timeframes for the completion of work were provided. There was scope for success criteria to be shared with students to clarify expectations and support their completion of work.
- While students were working, highly effective teacher monitoring was evident, and individual support was provided as was necessary. In a significant minority of lessons, it was good that handouts were provided to some students to support their engagement in the learning activity, and they were encouraged to use assistive technology to support their participation in lessons.
- Upon reviewing students' folders, it was evident that, at times, before teaching a new topic, students completed a reflection activity to record prior learning. In the majority of the lessons observed, there was a need for teachers to ascertain students' prior knowledge before proceeding with instruction. There were instances when students already knew much of what was being taught, leading to insufficient challenge or questions that did not provide an appropriate level of difficulty.
- In the focus group discussion, students were very positive about their use of mind maps to support their learning. In some instances, students' copybooks and folders did not effectively record their learning. Consideration should be given as to how students could be further supported in developing the skill of 'managing myself' to make their folders and copybooks a more accessible and easily referenced resource.
- High-quality written formative feedback was observed on some pieces of students' work. The frequency of providing feedback should be reviewed at subject department level, to ensure regular formative feedback is provided on student work.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support for Home Economics was good.
- Overall, the timetable allocation for the subject was very good.
- Students were well supported in making informed subject choices at both junior and senior cycle through various inputs, including a short subject-sampling programme for first-year students. The subject-sampling programme was highly valued by students in the focus group. All TY students undertake a Home Economics module. To further support incoming fifth-year students to make informed subject choices, they would appreciate more information, including hearing from LC students about their experiences of the subject.
- It was positive that subject option bands were generated based on students' preferences.
- A health and safety risk assessment was undertaken by the subject department this year. A copy of this document has been shared with senior management, and this was very good practice.
- The subject department receives an annual budget for replacing, upgrading, and maintaining equipment.
- The home economics facilities include one kitchen and a storage area. The kitchen is equipped with seven workstations for students. In practical food studies lessons, it was reported that students worked in groups of more than two. Smaller group sizes would maximise students' opportunities to undertake more tasks, allowing them to further develop and refine their skills. A resourcing plan should be developed to accommodate more equipment in the kitchen, allowing for additional workstations, subject to the availability of resources.
- To enable teachers to fully engage in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process, a specific focus for classroom teachers should be determined and shared to support action planning for improvement.
- A classroom-based assessment (CBA) timetable was reviewed and should be made available to teachers, parents, and students. It would also be beneficial to evaluate the timetable's effectiveness in helping students manage their workload.

3. Planning and preparation

- The overall quality of subject planning was good.
- The subject department has recently expanded to a two-teacher department. High levels of collaborative practice and resource sharing were already evident.
- Good progress was made in developing JC units of learning. Best practice was evident when the units provided an integrated approach to students' learning. There was scope for teachers to document how they plan for the incremental development of students' practical food studies skills, and for assessment tasks to be more fully aligned to the action verbs in the intended learning.
- It is highly commendable that the LC plans promote an integrated approach to student learning, as this facilitates the development of cross-curricular connections.
- A varied and broad TY plan was in place. Consideration should be given to adapting the module by introducing an overarching theme that cohesively unites the various areas of study to provide a unique learning experience for TY students. An assessment framework should be developed to clarify for students how they will be assessed and to guide the feedback provided to students on their learning.
- It is good that the subject department reviews student attainment in certificate examinations. To further this good work, student attainment could be regularly reviewed against predicted achievement to assess the extent to which students are meeting or exceeding their potential.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

For the students of Christian Brothers College about their learning in Home Economics

Date of inspection:17/09/2024

What kind of inspection did your school have?



A subject inspection was completed in your school. The inspector observed lessons and spoke with the principal and teachers. The inspector met with a group of students to talk to them about their learning in Home Economics.

What were the main findings of the inspection?



- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the observed lessons was good.
- In lessons, it was good that students had the opportunity to be active in their learning and work together.
- In the focus group, students said they really enjoyed the subject, especially when teachers made the lessons relatable to their own lives.

What did the inspector recommend to make teaching and learning better in Home Economics?



- When planning, teachers should think about what students already know and make sure there are enough challenges for everyone.
- There should be more opportunities for the whole class to check their learning, do peer and self-assessments, and get written feedback more regularly.
- To make students' learning in food studies practical lessons better, they should work in smaller groups. To make this possible, there should be a plan to get more equipment for the kitchen, as resources allow.

Thank you for taking the time to read this page.
Special thanks to the students who participated in the focus group.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school's Board is pleased that the overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons was good and that the students were provided with opportunities to be active in their learning and to work collaboratively. The school's Board are also pleased that during the student focus group discussions with the Inspector, students shared that they enjoyed their learning in Home Economics, especially when the teachers made the content very relatable to their lives. It is positive to note that subject provision, whole school support and subject planning was good, with some very good practice noted.

The Board takes its duties in relation to Child Protection and Anti-Bullying very seriously and was pleased that the Inspector found that the school met all the requirements in relation to the associated checks.

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

The Board and subject teachers recognise and appreciate the need for a consideration of prior learning when planning lessons to ensure appropriate, especially upward, challenges for all students. In order to further enhance learner outcomes in food studies practical lessons, the senior management team, in conjunction with the home economics department, have initiated the development of a resourcing plan to provide equipment for additional workstations so that students can work in smaller groups. In addition, teachers have already begun to provide further opportunities for regular whole-class assessment, peer and self-assessment, along with written formative feedback. In relation to subject planning, the subject department have begun to revise plans to allow for the incremental development of students' practical food studies skills, and in so doing, to align assessment tasks more closely with the action verbs in the intended learning outcomes.

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	Examples of descriptive terms
Excellent	**Provision that is excellent** is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
Very good	**Provision that is very good** is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
Good	**Provision that is good** is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	**Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard** is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	**Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard** is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective