



An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Óige  
Department of Education  
and Youth

# Subject Inspection: Home Economics REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Sancta Maria College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Ballyroan Crescent Rathfarnham Dublin 16
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	60341P
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	16/09/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	26/11/2025

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# 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

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>Bí Cineálta</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) are prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the reception area. <i>Following the school's adoption of the updated procedures 2025, it is also required to display a student-friendly version incorporating the name of the DLP beside the CSS.</i></li><li>2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li><li>3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of <i>Bí Cineálta</i>, it is reviewed annually (or earlier if required) and includes a student/pupil friendly version that is displayed where students/pupils and the school community can see it.</li><li>2. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, staff, parents and students/pupils.</li><li>3. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides an update to the board at each ordinary board meeting that meets the requirements of <i>Bí Cineálta</i></li></ol>

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

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# Subject inspection

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	15/09/2025 and 16/09/2025
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students, including focus groups</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

## School context

Sancta Maria College is a voluntary secondary school for girls with a current enrolment of 578 students. The school operates under the trusteeship of Catholic Education an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). The school provides the Junior Cycle (JC) programme, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocation Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), and the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE). Home Economics is offered as an optional Junior Cycle and at Leaving Certificate subject. All TY students complete a ten-week module of Home Economics.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good.
- Relationships between teachers and students were very positive, creating a classroom atmosphere that promoted learning.
- Overall, assessment practice requires improvement to achieve a good standard.
- The overall quality of subject provision was very good; it was very positive that the targets identified in the school's digital learning plan were successfully realised in home economics classrooms and at the subject department level.
- It was notable that school's self-evaluation (SSE) process was a key focus of the work of the board and senior leadership team; an improvement plan has been drafted and it is positive that further work is planned to identify actions for teachers to support ongoing developments in teaching, learning and assessment.
- The quality of subject planning was good and the subject department displayed high levels of collaboration; preparation for individual lessons required improvement.

### Recommendations

- Assessment for learning practices, including embedding assessment practices during lessons and the provision of recorded formative feedback on students' work should be further developed.
- To support the incremental development of students' food practical skills, a review of the sequencing of the skills outlined in JC and TY units of learning should be undertaken so that they are structured to promote progressive and ongoing skill development.
- In planning individual lessons, teachers should reflect on how lesson design can be improved to provide sufficient challenge, make optimal use of available time, and better address students' individual learning needs
- To further the good work undertaken to date, the home economics department should identify and implement specific teaching, learning or assessment strategies to support the achievement of the agreed SSE targets.

# Detailed findings and recommendations

## 1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good.
- Overall, assessment practice requires improvement to achieve a good standard.
- In the lessons visited, there were very respectful interactions between students and their teachers. This created a very positive learning environment for students.
- In most lessons, effective practice was observed when clear learning intentions aligned with the lesson were shared and discussed with students. At times, there was scope to adapt the depth of engagement and or the number of learning intentions so that they presented a greater challenge for students.
- In half of the lessons observed, good practice was observed when teachers provided students with an opportunity to revisit and recall their learning from the previous lesson. To support continuity in students' learning and to identify strengths and areas for development, this practice should be extended to all lessons.
- In one lesson, effective practice was evident when the teacher successfully used learning intentions to assess students' attainment of the intended learning. To further support students' learning, assessment tasks should be integrated throughout lessons, to ensure that the intended learning has taken place before progressing to new learning.
- In all lessons, teachers used digital presentations to share new information. Good practice was evident when images accompanied text to aid students' understanding. At times, there was an over reliance on note-taking from the teachers' digital presentations. In a minority of lessons, students were observed creating their own notes. This effective practice could be extended.
- Teachers allocated time during lessons to assign and explain homework tasks and this was good. Students in focus groups welcomed that homework was shared on the school's digital platform. Very effective practice was observed when students corrected written homework at the beginning of the lesson and they noted corrections, where necessary. In a significant minority of lessons, students were provided with the opportunity to peer assess work and this very good practice could be extended.
- In a practical food studies lesson observed, highly effective practice was evident when teacher-led and student-led spot demonstrations supported students in learning or revising the key steps needed to successfully complete a practical task. Students at work demonstrated very good safety and hygiene practices.
- Students were confident using their digital devices to access shared resources and upload their work. It was positive that certain tasks, such as evaluations in food studies, were completed digitally. Students were also given choice in which digital tool they used to present their learning, supporting both engagement and digital literacy.
- Teachers also provided students with choice in how they presented their food literacy skills classroom-based assessment (CBA), and students valued this approach.
- In a sample of students' reflections reviewed, they identified and recognised a wide range of skills they had developed through undertaking the CBA. A review of students' work showed that they were regularly assigned workbook questions, teacher-designed handouts, and some creative tasks to complete. Overall, there was scope to provide a greater range of activities and assessment tasks to further support key skill development in JC.
- A range of students' work was reviewed across copybooks, folders, digital folders, and workbooks. Good practice was evident where exemplars of high-quality work were shared with students. In answering homework questions, many students relied heavily on incorporating teachers' notes in their responses. To support a more accurate assessment of learning and to further develop students' understanding, they should be encouraged to respond in their own words, use success criteria as a guide, and refer to notes only when necessary.

- Students in the focus group greatly valued formative feedback. In discussions, they recalled receiving oral formative feedback from teachers but noted that they generally do not record this and this could be addressed.
- Some students' reports reviewed during the evaluation outlined both their strengths and areas for development, and this was very good practice. A review of students' work showed evidence of teacher monitoring and correction, with limited formative feedback provided in either digital or written format. It was positive that sixth-year students are tracking the progress made in questions submitted for correction. Overall, there was a need for more regular recorded feedback from teachers on students' work, including feedback on CBA tasks.
- Students' work demonstrated a range of hand sewing techniques and reported that they enjoying undertaking this work.

## 2. Subject provision and whole-school support

- The overall quality of subject provision was very good.
- Students had very good access to the subject.
- The time allocated on students' timetables to study the subject is in line with requirements.
- The home economics facilities included two high quality, well-resourced kitchens.
- A risk assessment for the specialist facilities is under development and it is positive that teachers are central to this process.
- Teachers have very good access to professional learning opportunities and the school supports their engagement with the subject association.
- It was very good that the targets identified in the school's digital learning plan were realised in home economics classrooms and at subject department level.
- It was notable that school's self-evaluation (SSE) process was a key focus of the work of the board and senior leadership team; an improvement plan has been drafted and it is positive that further work is planned to identify actions for teachers to support ongoing developments in teaching, learning and assessment.

## 3. Planning and preparation

- It was very positive that a subject convenor was in place, as this supported communication within the subject department and between senior management and subject teachers. In addition, it provided teachers with opportunities to develop their leadership capacities. Minutes of meetings were available, and it was good that actions to be completed following meetings were recorded.
- High levels of collaboration were evident in the sharing of practice and digital resources.
- It was positive that the TY module has been updated to incorporate key aspects of the new TY Programme Statement and the subject department had some ideas to further enhance the module. Student feedback should be considered when reviewing the module.
- JC units of learning were prepared for all groups. Effective practice was evident when learning outcomes from different strands were integrated within the units of learning, and it was good that resources were recorded. Currently, one learning outcome requiring students to use sewing machines is not planned for and should be addressed.
- It was good that food studies practical skills were identified in the JC and TY units of learning, however, these skills were not always developed incrementally. A review of the sequencing of the skills outlined in the units of learning should be undertaken so that they are structured to promote progressive and ongoing skill development.
- Planning for individual lessons requires improvement. Teachers should reflect on how lesson design can be improved to provide sufficient challenge for all, make optimal use of available time, and better address students' individual learning needs.

- The subject department had analysed student attainment in state examinations and compared it with national attainment levels. Going forward, the uptake of the subject at higher level could also be included in this analysis.
- It was good that that school self-evaluation targets had been discussed at subject department level. To further this effective practice, the home economics department should identify and implement specific teaching, learning or assessment strategies to support the achievement of the agreed SSE targets.

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.



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## For the students of Sancta Maria College about their learning in Home Economics

Date of inspection: 16/09/2025

### 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 lessons observed was good.
- Relationships between teachers and their students were very positive and this provided a classroom atmosphere which supported learning.
- Overall, assessment practices require improvement.

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



- Teachers should provide regular opportunities to use assessment to strengthen students' learning, and should give students more recorded feedback on their work.
- The development of food studies practical skills at JC and in TY should be reviewed so that the skills learned are more appropriate to the year group.
- When planning lessons, teachers should further consider how to provide the right level of challenge for students, make the best use of class time, and further take into account how each student learns.

**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 Board of Management notes and welcomes the very positive findings of this Home Economics report, particularly

- the recognition of the very positive student-teacher relationships, which create a classroom atmosphere that promotes learning
- the successful realisation of the school's digital learning targets in the Home Economics classrooms
- the high level of collaboration displayed among the Home Economics department
- the very good provision and support for Home Economics in the school
- the recognition of the key focus of the school's improvement plan, which supports ongoing developments in learning, teaching and assessment, through the school self-evaluation process.

## **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 will address and fully implement all the recommendations in this report. The key focus will be the review of assessment for learning practices, as has been identified in our school's School Improvement Plan 2025-2026.

## 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
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Provision that is excellent</b> 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
<b>Very good</b>	<b>Provision that is very good</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Provision that is good</b> 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
<b>Requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b> 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
<b>Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b> 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