



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Subject Inspection: Home Economics REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Loreto Abbey Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Dalkey Co Dublin
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	60130C
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	06/03/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	19/05/2025

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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>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.</li><li>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li><li>3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>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> or <i>Bí Cineálta (2024)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.</li><li>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.</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>	03/03/2025 and 06/03/2025
<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 six lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

## School context

Loreto Abbey is a fee-charging, secondary school with a current enrolment of 743 students. It is under the trusteeship of the Loreto Education Trust. The school provides the Junior Cycle (JC) programme, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme the Leaving Certificate (LC) programme. Home Economics is provided as an optional Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate subject, and is a core component of TY. In addition, some TY students elect to study a textiles module.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the lessons observed was good; interactions among students and between students and teachers were very respectful and positive.
- Highly effective practice was evident when teachers supported students in connecting previous learning with new concepts.
- Teachers provided very good support to help students develop attributes of the key junior cycle skill of 'managing myself,' as evidenced by students having developed comprehensive and easily accessible records of learning.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole school support was good.
- The overall quality of subject planning and preparation was good; the relatively newly established subject department have developed very effective practices to support collaborative planning and the sharing of resources.
- Planning for the development of students' food literacy skills required development.

### Recommendations

- Many classroom and homework tasks were sourced from workbooks or certificate examination papers; teachers should include a greater range of tasks so that students see the relevance of their learning to real-world contexts, deepen their understanding, and further develop transferable skills.
- To enhance student participation in lessons, teachers should utilise strategies to support students in sharing their learning, regularly encourage note-making, and maximise student participation in group activities.
- In order to provide all students who wish to study the subject with the opportunity to do so, third-year and TY home economics class sizes were large, commensurate with the number of workstations and the kitchen size. This created challenges at classroom level, and senior management should keep this under review.
- The subject department should identify the food literacy skills, particularly practical food studies skills, that junior cycle students should develop over three years and plan for the incremental development of these skills.

## Detailed findings and recommendations

### 1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- Interactions among students and between students and teachers were very respectful and positive. Teachers were very affirming of students' work in lessons.
- Teachers created visually engaging classroom and corridor displays that promoted the subject and related careers.
- In all lessons, teachers shared learning intentions with students, and these scaffolded the learning in lessons. At times, rephrasing or refinement of the intended learning was needed to better support students and teachers in using these intentions to facilitate reflection and to assess learning progress.
- In many lessons, some assessment of students' achievement of the intended learning took place. However, there was a need to allocate more time in lessons to assess students' progress in achieving the intended learning. To maximise student engagement, assessment strategies that require the participation of all students could be used.
- It was good that teachers provided students with opportunities to work with others. Student participation was highest when the tasks designed required all members of the group to engage, roles were assigned, seating arrangements supported discussions, and tasks were sufficiently challenging. There was scope to extend practices that support high levels of student participation in group tasks.
- Teachers regularly used oral questions to stimulate students' thinking. Highly effective practice was evident when teachers supported students in connecting previous learning with new concepts.
- In most lessons, teachers' questions were not directed to specific students, which often led to the same students answering repeatedly. To increase student participation in lessons, teachers should use strategies to support the engagement of all students in answering questions, whether orally or through another mode of communication.
- Junior cycle students have two home economics lessons per week. To support continuity between lessons, each class could begin with a student-led recap of prior learning.
- Teachers provided very good support to help students develop some of the attributes of the key skill of 'managing myself,' as evidenced by students having developed comprehensive and easily accessible records of learning. Students were very well prepared for lessons and had the required materials needed.
- Students were provided with graphic organisers to support them in recording their learning, which was beneficial. At times, in the lessons observed, teachers encouraged students to use their own words when recording their learning and this was good. However, a review of students' copybooks reflected that, in many instances, students had not personalised the notes taken. To foster independent learning, students should be further supported by teachers to develop note-making skills.
- In the lessons observed, teachers effectively incorporated digital technology (DT), and students efficiently used DT to access resources and conduct research. In lessons, students were confident and competent in using DT.
- Students spoke very highly of their enjoyment in undertaking classroom-based assessment one, and described how it provided an outlet for their creativity and supported their wellbeing.
- Many classroom and homework tasks were sourced from workbooks or certificate examination papers. Teachers should include a greater range of tasks so that students see the relevance of their learning to real-world contexts, deepen their understanding, and further develop their transferable skills.

## 2. Subject provision and whole school support

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole school support was good.
- Student preference informs the formation of subject option bands in the Junior Cycle programme and at Leaving Certificate and this was good practice.
- Very good teacher deployment practices were evident.
- Specialist facilities were well resourced by the board.
- Home Economics is a popular subject, particularly at junior cycle level. Senior management and the subject department have reflected on the uptake of the subject at Leaving Certificate. This year, to support the uptake of the subject at Leaving Certificate level, all TY students study the subject.
- In order to provide all students who wish to study the subject with the opportunity to do so, third-year and TY home economics class sizes were large commensurate with the number of workstations and kitchen size. As a result, in these food studies practical lessons, students often work in groups of three rather than in pairs. This created challenges, including reduced practical learning opportunities and additional health and safety considerations. Senior management should keep class sizes, commensurate with the facilities available, under review.
- Teachers were very well supported by the board and senior management team to avail of teacher professional learning.
- One home economics teacher organises a lunchtime needlework club, which students praised highly. The teacher was commended for their valuable contribution to promoting the subject, enhancing learning, and supporting students' well-being.
- A risk assessment for the home economics kitchens was developed. As the kitchens are also used to undertake practical textiles work, the multi-purpose function of the kitchens should be referenced as part of an annual risk assessment review.
- One-hour lessons provided challenges in delivering highly effective learner experiences and outcomes in food studies practical lessons. Senior management and teachers should continue to work together to seek possible solutions to address the challenges arising.

## 3. Planning and preparation

- The overall quality of subject planning and preparation was good; the relatively newly established subject department have developed very effective practices to support collaborative planning and the sharing of resources.
- The facilitators' report arising from subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) meetings have been stored in the plan and this is good practice.
- Junior cycle units of learning were developed. It was good that teachers reflected on the implementation of the plans and have identified strengths and possible areas for development.
- In some units, many learning outcomes were included. The subject department should review the units to refine the number of outcomes in each. Teachers should design assessment tasks aligned with the intended learning, and these should be recorded.
- Planning for the development of students' food literacy skills required improvement. The subject department should identify the food literacy skills—particularly practical food studies skills—that junior cycle students should develop over three years and plan for the incremental development of these skills.
- There was some overlap between the TY programme of work and students' learning in the subject at junior cycle. Teachers should review plans to provide progression for all learners, regardless of whether they have studied the subject previously.

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



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**For the students of Loreto Abbey  
Secondary School about their  
learning in Home Economics  
Date of inspection: 06/03/2025**

### **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, learning and assessment in the lessons observed was good.
- In the lessons observed, teachers supported students to link previous learning with new concepts.
- Teachers provided very good support to help students build skills in 'managing myself'; in most instances, students had developed detailed records of learning.

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



- Teachers should design assessment tasks to help students see how their learning connects to real-life situations, improve their understanding, and create more opportunities for them to build skills they can use in different areas.
- To increase student participation in lessons, teachers should use strategies to support students to share their learning, note make and contribute to group work activities.
- The subject department should decide which food studies skills; especially practical skills, junior cycle students should develop, and plan for the gradual development of these skills.

**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**

Overall, the Board of Management is pleased with all the very positive comments in relation to the provision and management of Home Economics in the school. In particular, the Board acknowledges and appreciates the positive comments with regard to teaching and learning, e.g. the very respectful and positive interactions between students and teachers; teachers highly effective practice in connecting previous learning to new concepts, collaborative planning and sharing of resources. Recognition of the very good support to students in developing their self-management skills is a significant aspect of our ethos and in that context, the Board is pleased to see this recognised.

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

Good to see that the Inspection report acknowledged the school's philosophy of enabling all students to participate in H.E. in Transition Year and to facilitate all students who wish to opt for HE at junior cycle. While this results in class sizes a little above the ideal, the Board of Management acknowledges the excellent cooperation of the teachers that puts the needs of the students first. The Board will continue to review the situation and, where facilities and resources permit, will endeavour to keep class sizes to the optimum maximum of 20 per class.

As this is a relatively newly established Subject Department, the Board, through the Principal, will ensure that adequate support is available to the teachers and that they will be facilitated to engage in professional development as appropriate.

The specific strategies recommended in the report, e.g note-making, group activities and increasing the range of tasks, will be discussed by the Department with a view to using the best teaching and learning methodologies. The teachers will continue to work collaboratively and share expertise and resources and take account of the very helpful suggestions offered in the report.

The H.E. department has now sourced, and will avail of, the templates on the School Planning website and will use these in their planning for the new school year. The department, along with all other subject departments will be enabled, through the Croke Park hours, to plan and work together.



## 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