

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection in Construction Studies and Materials
Technology (Wood)**

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Mhuire
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Strokestown County Roscommon
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	65100S

Date of Inspection: 11-03-2019



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agus Scileanna**
Department of
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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 Construction Studies and Materials Technology (Wood) 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 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.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

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.

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

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date of inspection	11 March 2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Scoil Mhuire, Strokestown, is a mixed voluntary secondary school operating under the trusteeship of Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). At the time of the inspection it had an enrolment of 551 students. The school currently provides the Junior Cycle programme, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), Leaving Certificate and a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and of learning was very good overall.
- All lessons were conducted in a very positive atmosphere where students were strongly encouraged to engage and participate; the arrangement where students have a choice of projects is commended as it is indicative of a student-centred approach.
- The quality of assessment was good in all lessons observed, with scope for improvement regarding teachers' provision of written formative feedback on students' work and the use of learning intentions.
- Planning and preparation for Materials Technology (Wood) (MTW) and Construction Studies (CS) are good; some areas for improvement were noted in the yearly programmes of work.
- The MTW and CS teachers are skilled subject specialists who work diligently to ensure that their knowledge is current by attending relevant continuing professional development.
- The subjects are very well supported with appropriate timetabling and resource provision.

Recommendations

- All lessons should be underpinned by explicit learning intentions to guide teaching and learning strategies.
- The level and quality of written developmental feedback provided to students on their work should be improved, particularly with regard to the identification of spelling errors and the quality of freehand sketching.
- The programmes of work should be further developed to provide greater detail on teaching methodologies, resources and assessment; an integrated approach whereby the theoretical and practical elements of the syllabus are taught concurrently is recommended.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and of learning was very good overall. Assessment was observed to be at a good standard with some scope for improvement.
- All lessons were conducted in a very positive atmosphere where students were strongly encouraged to engage and participate. Students' confidence was boosted through ongoing affirmation of their efforts throughout the lessons. It was evident that individual students responded well to such encouragement.
- All teachers began by establishing the lesson aims and objectives. To further develop this, specific learning intentions should be shared with students at the outset and reviewed at the end of all lessons. This would help students to assess their own progress while also providing teachers with an insight into areas that require further development.
- The quality of the questioning strategies employed by teachers during lessons was high. There was a good blend of both higher-order and lower-order questioning and this facilitated a differentiated approach that helped to ensure that all students contributed in a meaningful manner.
- The lessons were very interactive, and provided students with very good opportunities to engage with each other and with their teachers to explore topics and demonstrate their learning. There was a good balance between teacher input and student activity in the lessons. The arrangement where students have a choice of projects is commended as it indicative of a student-centred approach.
- An emphasis on the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills was a feature of all the lessons observed. Students' understanding of subject specific terminology was supported by clear explanations of relevant terms and their use. Literacy skills were also supported by the print-rich environment such as information posters, safety signage and labelling of equipment. It is advised that a number line or ruler should be displayed in the MTW room to support numeracy and particularly for those students who find measurement difficult.
- Very good oral developmental feedback was provided to students in all lessons. Strategies, such as asking the student to note the oral feedback, should be developed to encourage students to further engage with feedback. There is scope to extend the use of written formative feedback beyond the grades or percentages being provided on in-house examinations. Similarly, class work and homework require more written formative feedback.
- The theory and practical elements of the MTW syllabus are taught separately. An integrated approach whereby the theoretical and practical element of the syllabus are taught concurrently is recommended. In the practical lessons observed, theoretical elements were referenced but students did not take any notes or make sketches and these opportunities were missed to reinforce student learning. Homework should be utilised to support this integrated approach.
- There was effective use of a project self-assessment sheet in one lesson which provided students with the opportunity to review and self-critique their own projects. There is potential to expand this worthwhile practice to include peer assessment of other students' work.

- During practical demonstrations, teachers were very well prepared and taught key skills to students in a logical and sequential manner. Opportunities should be sought to extend the use of peer demonstration, especially when revising material covered in previous lessons.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support for MTW and CS is very good. The subjects are timetabled suitably. Lessons are distributed evenly across the week and double-period lessons are provided as appropriate to facilitate practical work.
- First-year students make their choice of optional subjects after a short sampling programme and there is scope for them to change their mind as necessary during the first term. In line with good practice, students preparing to enter fifth year are offered an open choice of optional subjects, and subject bands are then generated to accommodate these choices. Good supports and information are provided to students and parents at times of transition.
- CS is offered on a modular basis in TY and provides students with a broad experience of CS, which is commended. The plan that is in place to support the module is overly aligned to the senior cycle syllabus and is not reflective of the very good programme that is currently being offered. The plan should be updated to reflect current practice.
- A well-equipped MTW room is available and the department is well supported by management.
- There is good awareness of health and safety issues among students and very detailed risk assessments are in place. Students have appropriate access to personal protective equipment (PPE) which they were observed to use when required. Safe working zones are clearly marked around machines. When teachers were using machines they were not consistent in wearing the appropriate PPE equipment. It is important that goggles are used by the teacher, as appropriate, to model best practice.
- The MTW and CS teachers are skilled subject specialists and work diligently to ensure that their knowledge is current by attending relevant continuing professional development events.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Department planning is good overall. The use of an online team site to collaborate is worthwhile; this ensures the department plan is a working document which is updated regularly.
- The planning and preparation of all lessons observed were very good. Suitable teaching and learning resources were prepared in advance and activities were planned to supplement instruction. Parametric modelling software was utilised effectively to support both teaching and learning.
- Cross-curricular links have been identified and developed with the metalwork department. It is advised to further develop this approach, with the science and mathematics department, with a view to promoting the school-level impact of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) partnerships on teaching, learning and assessment.
- Data regarding student attainment in certificate examinations are reviewed annually and compared to national norms and cross-referenced with achievements in other subjects. Senior and junior cycle higher level uptake is consistently high.

- A programme of work has been developed for each year group and provides information regarding the topics to be covered and the associated timeframes. These programmes of work should be developed further to provide greater detail on teaching methodologies, resources and assessment with a view to supporting the integrated and concurrent teaching of the theoretical and practical elements of the syllabus.
- Practices relating to record keeping and reporting to parents are good. Students' attendance, examination results and progress in class are communicated to parents at parent-teacher meetings, through the school journal and in formal reports at Christmas, summer and after the mock examinations for third and sixth years.

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

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

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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 school welcomes this report, its constructive recommendations and its affirmation of the high quality of teaching and learning in the subject area.

The school will work to implement and address any recommendations outlined in this report.

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 of quality 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 <i>very good</i> 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;