

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Applied Technology and Technology

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Colaiste Choilm
Seoladh na scoile / School address	O' Moore Street Tulach Mhor Co. Offaly
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	65610S

Date of Inspection: 28-01-2020



**An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna**
Department of
Education and Skills

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 Applied Technology and Technology 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.

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

Dates of inspection	28-29 January 2020
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 five lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Coláiste Choilm is an all-boys voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 608. The school provides the Junior Certificate, the Junior Cycle Student Award programme, an optional Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Lessons are one hour duration.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good, with assessment for learning practices identified as an area for improvement.
- The quality of student learning was good overall, however, in some lessons practical skills and theoretical knowledge were developed independently of each other.
- A very calm and respectful learning environment was evident in all lessons observed.
- Digital technologies was used effectively to support teaching and learning.
- The quality of whole-school support for Technology is very good; timetabling arrangements for junior cycle Technology are irregular.
- Planning and preparation for individual lessons was of good quality: subject department planning is under developed.

Recommendations

- Teachers should incorporate a more expansive range of assessment for learning strategies to assess students' learning during lessons.
- To improve students' learning experience; teachers should provide students with a greater range of learning opportunities integrating both practical and theoretical learning.
- The subject department plan requires further development to include more detailed learner outcomes linked to methodologies, classroom projects and assessment methods.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good. In the best lessons skills and knowledge were developed in an integrated manner. This is a practice that should be utilised more frequently in all lessons.
- The atmosphere in all lessons was very good and conducive to providing students a supportive learning environment. Classroom management was very good with exemplary student behaviour noted.
- Most lessons were well structured, with a minority requiring a rebalancing between teacher exposition and student input. Purposeful learning featured in a few lessons, with scope for more student-centred and challenging activities to further enhance the learners' experience.
- The explicit sharing of learning intentions with students occurred in all lessons. Best practice was observed where the learning was openly discussed and criteria for successful learning was established. Sufficient opportunities were provided during lesson conclusions to revisit the intended learning, methods to increase student input and voice should be utilised during this stage of the lesson to ensure that new learning is appropriately consolidated.
- Good quality student learning was observed when students engaged in groups and discussed different approaches to solving design based problems. The lesson featured rich student dialogue and the practical testing of theory. This integrated approach of theory with practice enabled students to become makers of meaning and understanding, this approach should be extended into all lessons.
- In the lessons that were conducted in the computer lab, good use was made of programming software, flow diagrams and programmable devices. In one lesson, students were required to reverse engineer an exemplar project and write a programme to perform specific tasks. This gradual move from concrete models to abstract thinking is good practice. The embedding of such technologies earlier in the applied technology curricular programme and incorporating this into project work should lead to richer learning experiences.
- Assessment practices observed were of good quality overall. The provision of oral feedback by teachers to students was a significant strength. A review of students' written work noted limited evidence of formative commentary. Written formative feedback on students' work should be prioritised to inform students' how to maximise their learning.
- Assessment for learning strategies supported students' learning in some lessons. In order to improve the effectiveness of student learning, a more expansive range of assessment for learning strategies that assess students' learning and provide immediate learning checks should be incorporated into all lessons.
- A variety of questioning techniques was deployed during lessons. The general purpose was to check for understanding of prior learning and progress new learning. Questions ranged from lower-order recall type responses to higher-order requiring more complex solutions, pausing and redirecting was judicious in particular when students were formulating multipart replies. Question distribution was good and student responses were frequently affirmed.
- Homework was regularly assigned and monitored. The quality of student work presented in copybooks varied, with some of a high standard. The development of acceptable standards for students' written work and sketching is an area for development.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of whole-school support for technology is very good.
- A temporary classroom for teaching and learning of Technology is in place. However, during the evaluation no lessons were conducted in the temporary classroom. The current classroom poses significant challenges to the teaching of the subject. School management are currently progressing plans for the completion of a Technology specialist classroom.
- Further to this commitment school management actively promote the subject, and have recently purchased specialist equipment to facilitate students' project realisation and design.
- Time allocated for Technology at junior and senior cycle is appropriate. The distribution of classes in junior cycle is irregular, as all of the time allocated to the subject is scheduled in second and third year. This may impede the incremental development of student skills and experiences that the desired three years of study provides.
- School management should review the scheduling of Technology classes across the three years of junior cycle as they plan to introduce Applied Technology next year.
- A TY Technology module provides students with appropriate sampling, enabling informed option subject selection. Numbers studying Technology at senior cycle are very good with two classes in both fifth and sixth year. Uptake of higher-level at senior cycle is very good.
- Management is supportive of engagement with continuing professional development, with good records of attendance available during the evaluation.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning and preparation for individual lessons was of good quality, suitable resources and teaching aids helped to enhance students learning experiences.
- Subject department planning requires further development. Planning documentation including modular planning for the new specification, should include more detailed learner outcomes, teaching methodologies, samples of classroom projects and methods for assessing learning.
- Planning documentation for the inclusion of students with additional educational needs requires development in recognition of mixed-ability student profiles. In order to build expertise, interventions and strategies adaptable to practical lessons should be investigated further.
- Commendably the single-teacher subject department meets with members of other technology education cross-subject departments during formal planning times throughout the academic year.
- To develop deeper pedagogical discussions during these cross-subject meetings, a section for teaching, learning and assessment should be included as standing items on the meeting agenda for meetings.
- A detailed analysis of outcomes from certificate examinations is undertaken annually and recorded in the department plan. Going forward this evidence combined with a rolling analysis of outcomes from class tests and project work, will support the formation of an action plan for ongoing subject improvement.

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

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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 <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;