

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Jarlath's College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Tuam Co Galway
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	68074M

Date of Inspection: 15-02-2017



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 Construction Studies & Materials Technology (Wood) under the following headings:

1. Learning, teaching 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.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	15-02-2017 and 17-02-2017
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 5 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Jarlath's College, Tuam is an all-boys voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. The school's total enrolment is 535 students. In addition to the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes the school provides a Transition Year and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Overall, the quality of teaching Materials Technology (Wood) (MTW) and Construction Studies (CS) was good.
- Oral feedback to students was a strength in all lessons but the standard of written formative feedback provided to students on their copybooks or folders was less than satisfactory and homework was not given with regularity.
- The quality of questioning ranged from satisfactory to very good.
- Fair and transparent systems are in place to support the uptake of MTW and CS and option bands are constructed based on students' choices which is very good.
- Subject provision and whole school support for MTW and CS is satisfactory; improvements are needed in some health and safety practices in the MTW rooms and in timetable provision for MTW syllabus delivery.
- The overall quality of departmental planning and preparation for MTW and CS was satisfactory; there was no evidence of planning for the concurrent teaching of theoretical and practical elements of MTW.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers' written feedback practices should be extended to include formative written feedback on students' copybooks in line with assessment for learning (AfL) best practice.
- An integrated approach whereby the theoretical and practical elements of the syllabus are taught concurrently is recommended; regular homework should be given to complement such integrated class work.
- Specific provision should be put in place for a health and safety audit in accordance with *Guidelines on Managing Safety and Health in PP Schools* and specific attention should be given to identifying risk in relation to dust extraction and marking out safe operating areas (SOAs).

- Further development of subject plans for MTW and CS should provide clear links between specific programme content and expected learning outcomes, teaching methods and student assessment.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall the quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good. There was evidence that teachers' practices were effective and that they were grounded in positive teacher-student relationships which led to purposeful engagement in learning.
- Learning intentions were shared at the outset of most lessons. These were mostly content-based. It is recommended that such intentions be expanded to reflect the key learning concepts and skills being taught in lessons and to link them to success criteria. This would help students assess their own progress while also providing teachers with an insight into areas that require further development.
- Effective learning was taking place during the lessons evaluated. Students were on task and purposefully engaged during all lesson activities; resulting in good quality learning. On occasion, teachers incorporated tasks that required students to work in groups and in pairs. This approach worked well in facilitating cooperative learning opportunities among students. In one lesson a problem solving approach was highly effective.
- An emphasis on the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills was a feature of all the lessons observed.
- There was evidence of differentiation particularly where teachers circulated during lessons to meet the learning needs of students. To extend this, it is suggested that teaching strategies which support students with special educational needs be incorporated into lessons to a greater extent.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was used to enhance learning in one of the lessons observed. The development and the use of a dedicated website to provide additional support for students' learning is highly commended. This resource has excellent potential and it is suggested that it be used to a greater extent across the subject department.
- Good oral feedback was provided to students in all lessons. 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 requires more written formative feedback.
- The quality of questioning ranged from satisfactory to very good. Where it was very good, teachers used a blend of both higher and lower order, directed and global questions. Where it was satisfactory, global questions tended to be overused, leading to a situation where the same students answered most of the questions.
- Teacher demonstrations included clear identification of the steps associated with the concept under development. While student demonstration was used on one occasion, it is recommended that its use be further extended.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole school support for MTW and CS is satisfactory. When the planned new preparation room and two new MTW rooms are complete, provision will improve significantly.
- SOAs need to be clearly marked around all machines in both MTW rooms.
- The effectiveness of the dust extraction system requires examination as there was a significant quantity of dust visible in the MTW rooms.
- The band saw in one of the MTW rooms is required to be connected to the extraction system in accordance with circular letter M45/01.
- Safety audits of the rooms should be carried out annually by the subject department using a risks-and-hazards checklist, in line with best practice. A copy of the associated report should be signed, dated and copied to management.
- Fair and transparent systems are in place to support the uptake of MTW and CS. Option bands are constructed based on students' choice which is to be commended.
- The time allocated for MTW in first and second year is three class periods per week and in third year is four class periods per week. The syllabus is based on a minimum of 240 hours of class contact over the three years of junior cycle. It is recommended that the school review its time allocation for MTW to ensure it meets with the requirements of the syllabus; the time allocation for CS is good.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of individual teacher planning for lessons was good overall.
- The quality of departmental planning and preparation for MTW and CS was satisfactory.
- A subject coordinator is appointed on a rotational basis; the role of the subject coordinator should be defined and outlined in the subject plan.
- Minutes of department meetings are recorded. It is suggested that these minutes be forwarded to management and better use be made of the school's *Subject Department Planning Checklist* where pedagogy and teaching approaches are framed.
- The schemes of work need to be developed to include proposed learning outcomes for each topic. Details should also be given on teaching resources available, methodologies to be used and planned methods of assessment on a topic-by-topic basis. A timeframe and teacher review should also be included.
- MTW theory is taught in the third term of second year. 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 this, opportunities were missed to reinforce student learning. Homework should be utilised to support this integrated approach.
- Assessment in first year is focused on practical elements of the syllabus. Clear procedures should be established for integrating the marks awarded for end-of-term examination of theory with those from continuous assessment of project work and portfolio work.

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

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 of Saint Jarlath's College welcomes this subject inspection report, as it acknowledges the good work and practices of the MTW/Construction department in the school and acts as a positive guide towards on-going development.

In particular, the board welcomes the positive comments around teaching and learning and the very good practices employed by the teachers in many areas.

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 MTW/Construction department has noted the constructive findings and key recommendations in the report and is committed to their implementation.

The department, in particular, has noted the recommendations regarding homework and whereas it was felt that appropriate homework had been given, which would have been evident in student copybooks, a review of practice will be undertaken.

Construction of new practical rooms will commence shortly. Best practice will be observed in the interim regarding all health and safety recommendations until the new accommodation becomes available.

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 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;