

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

**Subject Inspection in Metalwork and Engineering**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Ballymahon Vocational School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Ballymahon Co Longford
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	71690F

**Date of Inspection: 30-01-2019**



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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 Metalwork and Engineering 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

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	29 and 30 January 2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</li></ul>

### School context

Ballymahon Vocational School is a co-educational post-primary school under the aegis of Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board, with a current enrolment of 407 students. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The school's curricular programmes include the Junior Cycle, Junior Certificate Schools Programme, an optional Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning during the evaluation ranged from good to very good.
- The quality of assessment was good, with some areas for improvement, such as the use of formative assessment, identified.
- Very good teacher-student rapport was evident in the lessons observed.
- Whole-school support and provision for Metalwork and Engineering is very good.
- The quality of teachers' individual planning and preparation for the lessons observed was very good.
- The Engineering TY plan is dated and may limit students' opportunity to engage in design.

#### Recommendations

- The very good practice observed whereby lessons were underpinned by student-centred activities should be extended into all lessons.
- Students' assigned written work should be formatively assessed more frequently.
- The TY Engineering plan should be reviewed to include more detail and modernised to increase opportunities for students to engage in design.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning during the evaluation ranged from good to very good.
- The majority of lessons contained a variety of active learning activities. Students demonstrated good ability to work on these tasks both collaboratively and independently. This good practice should be incorporated into lesson planning throughout the subject department.
- In the lesson where an imbalance between teacher exposition and purposeful student activity was observed, there was scope for student-centred active methodologies to promote a greater level of student engagement.
- Teachers' use of questioning was very effective. The level of challenge required to answer the questions varied, providing all students with an opportunity to respond. In a few instances during teacher questioning, opportunities that could develop a deeper understanding of lesson content were not availed of. Questioning strategies that activate deeper engagement and understanding should be explored by the subject department.
- Demonstrations were used effectively to model best practice and refocus student activity. Students were encouraged to participate and were afforded the opportunity to model new techniques to their peers. Demonstration timing and duration aided learning and progressed understanding sufficiently.
- Teacher movement during lessons ensured students' progress was actively monitored. Student-teacher discourse was focused and meaningful, both the immediacy and the provision of ongoing oral formative feedback improved learner outcomes.
- Student learning was very effective when both the theoretical concepts and the practical skill content were combined in a manner that engaged students. Students associated lesson content to their local environment outside of school. This integrated holistic approach is very good practice.
- An enthusiastic learning atmosphere was evident during all lessons observed. In a senior cycle lesson the majority of students demonstrated a keen interest in pursuing an engineering related career, which illustrates the positive impact the subjects are having on students.
- Strategies concentrating on the development of students' literacy skills were effective and placed added responsibility on students to complete the task. Numeracy was seamlessly interwoven into subject matter and cross-curricular references contextualised the subject matter effectively. This enhanced the learning experience and supported learning.
- The engineering design process was utilised to good effect in some lessons. Students manufactured high-quality prototypes of their individual designs using a range of media, and incremental development was evident from their evolving prototypes and models. Opportunities for TY students to engage in the engineering design process to a greater extent should be explored.
- Homework is assigned regularly and recorded in student journals. Good quality written work was evident in copybooks. Teacher oversight and correction was noted in some instances. The subject department should devise a strategy whereby all students are provided with effective formative feedback that supports their individual development and improvement.

## **2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Whole-school support and provision for Metalwork and Engineering is very good.
- The school provides two well-resourced specialist rooms, a recent new build classroom and a long-established classroom. Visual schemes and posters depicting procedural details for student tasks are displayed to good effect.
- Participation in Metalwork and Engineering are very good with close to half the student cohort studying the subjects. Metalwork is the most popular optional subject in junior cycle with two classes taking the subject each year. Prospective first-year students are supported through the provision of an eight-week subject sampling period at the beginning of first year.
- Before entry to senior cycle, students are provided with an open subject choice and rank their preferences. Option bands are created and students choose subjects within these bands.
- A display cabinet showcasing high quality metalwork and engineering student project work is located adjacent to the reception. This positive whole-school promotion of student attainment is commendable.
- The subject department conducts an annual health and safety risk assessment and documented findings are forwarded to school management. Students worked with due regard to health and safety during lessons and used personal protective equipment as necessary. However, machine tool safe operation area boundaries are not marked, this should be prioritised.
- The two teacher subject department are assigned class groups for their complete cycle of study, ensuring continuity of provision for students.
- Management supports teachers' continuing professional development through the facilitation of peer mentoring and attendance at Junior Cycle for Teachers events. Management are currently assessing the feasibility of introducing team-teaching within the subject department. This collaborative practice is notable, contributing to teachers practice and implementation of the Junior Cycle Engineering specification.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The quality of teachers' individual planning and preparation for the lessons observed was very good. Equipment setup and various resources were prepared in advance, enabling smooth transitions during lessons.
- Schemes are based on learning outcomes for both theoretical and practical subject matter. The use of learning outcomes is good, however learning intentions should be combined to reflect the integrated approach in the teaching of the subject.
- The TY Engineering plan is dated and should be reviewed to include a more detailed and modernised programme with increased opportunities for students to engage in the engineering design process at an earlier stage in their programme of study.
- Records of formal subject department meetings contain evidence of discussions on operational matters and are shared with school management. It is recommended to include a teaching, learning and assessment section on the agenda as a standing item to facilitate deeper professional discussion in these areas.
- Commendably a detailed analysis of certificate examinations is conducted annually, informing subject planning and the subject department's developmental needs.

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.

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.

## 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
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;

# **Appendix**

**TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**



## **Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management of Ballymahon Vocational School welcomes the very positive findings of this report. The report affirms the very good practice of the Engineering/Metalwork Department in the school and acknowledges the valuable teaching and learning evident in this department. The Board is pleased to note the positive findings on student uptake of Metalwork/Engineering and is satisfied that whole school support and provision for this subject department is found to be very good.

We welcome this inspection report and are delighted to note that the quality of teachers' individual planning and preparation for the lessons observed is very good. The Board of Management is committed to the highest standards of teaching and learning and is satisfied to note that very good teacher-student rapport was evident in the lessons observed. The Board of Management is committed to developing and enhancing such positive practices in Ballymahon Vocational School.

## **Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

The school will work on a whole school approach to improve formative feedback.

The TY Engineering plan will be reviewed to increase opportunities for students to engage in design.