

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Technology

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Wolstan's Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Ballymakealy Clane Rd Celbridge
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91505T

Date of Inspection: 02-05-2019



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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 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

Date of inspection	02 May 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 five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

St. Wolstan's Community School is a girls' post-primary school with a current enrolment of 774 students. It operates under the trusteeship of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, the Le Chéile Schools Trust and Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board. The school offers the following programmes; the Junior Cycle, optional Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in the lessons observed, with scope for improvement identified in the area of assessment practices.
- The integration of solid modelling into the Technology programmes is very effective in developing students' communication skills, and deepening their conceptual understanding.
- Technology receives very good support from school management in the scheduling of lessons and the provision of resources in the specialist room.
- A very calm and respectful environment was evident in all lessons observed, with students demonstrating a very positive attitude to the subject.
- Lessons were underpinned by high levels of active student participation in a range of learning activities.
- Planning and preparation for lessons observed was very good, strategic planning practices within the subject department require further development.

Recommendations

- Teachers should provide students with constructive developmental written comments on their work to affirm their strengths and provide specific advice on how they could improve.
- The subject department should advance a strategic plan for Technology, including documenting evidence-based improvements in learner outcomes and conducting a feasibility study into the introduction of a Technology module onto the TY programme.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in the lessons observed. Assessment for learning practices requires further development and embedding within the department.
- Lessons were structured carefully with a clear focus on the advancement of new learning. Effective reflection through questioning and pair work enabled students to create links with prior learning from previous lessons.
- Students worked diligently on projects and tasks. A very calm and respectful environment was evident in all lessons observed, with students demonstrating a very positive attitude to the subject.
- Lessons were underpinned by high levels of active student participation in various learning activities. During the theoretical aspect of one lesson, students worked in groups to discuss their understanding of an electrical component, mathematically calculated the required capacity of the component, and shared their problem solving approach with the whole class. This collaborative approach to developing student understanding is commendable.
- Teachers have high expectations for student participation and engagement. The level of uptake at higher level and student attainment in certificate examinations are very good.
- Teacher led demonstrations were short and focused. Both planned and reactive demonstrations provided students with sufficient information to progress their learning activities forward.
- The quality of student project work was of a very high standard. Students safely demonstrated the use of technical equipment with confidence and dexterity. Learner autonomy coupled with high motivation and self-direction was evident during student led activities.
- Project work development was evident in students' copybooks using freehand sketches of initial concept designs. Full scale prototypes using card board are produced following a self-review concept comparison against agreed success criteria. In order to enrich this very good practice, students should be provided with a greater range of physical modelling materials and appropriate joining processes.
- Communication of completed design solutions was a significant strength, students employed computer aided design software to great effect when modelling their project parts and assemblies in advance of manufacture. The software afforded students an opportunity to manipulate concepts and virtually test their design.
- Homework was assigned in all lessons, in one lesson students co-created a worked solution with minimal guidance and self-assessed their individual solutions. The teachers' oversight, movement and interaction with students during this activity provided good opportunities for focused direction and support where necessary.
- The quality of assessment was good. During activities the teacher provided oral feedback in order to improve students' learning experience. To enhance this further it is recommended that teachers should provide students with constructive developmental written comments on their work to affirm their strengths and provide specific advice on how they could improve.

- Planned and reactive differentiation was successfully managed in the lessons observed. Teaching strategies employed to differentiate lessons included, teacher questioning, differentiating by outcome, tasks of varying difficulty and teacher movement.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Timetable provision for Technology is very good with a combination of single and double class periods for all year groups excluding TY.
- To facilitate informed decision making the school hosts an open morning, prospective first-year students choose Technology as an optional subject prior to entry. An options night is scheduled for students preparing to enter fifth year.
- Currently Technology is not offered in TY due to teaching time availability within the department. Going forward the subject department should conduct a feasibility study into the introduction of a Technology module onto the TY programme considering curricular and timetable developments in Junior Cycle.
- Health and safety signage was clearly displayed and personal protective equipment was readily available to students. It is recommended that the subject department conducts risks-and-hazards checks annually using the interactive risk assessments for post-primary schools as provided by the Health and Safety Authority. Priority should be given to the demarcation of safe operation zones around machine tools.
- Support for teachers' engagement with continuing professional development is very good with records available during the evaluation.
- The school provides a well-resourced digitally enabled specialist room. High quality student work is displayed in the classroom. Subject specific posters and digital devices, teaching aids and prototyping equipment are also easily accessible to support student learning.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Preparation for individual lessons was very good. Resources and materials were prepared in advance and were used effectively to guide and direct student learning. All lessons were planned effectively with a range of student centred activities aimed to engage and support student learning.
- Subject department meetings are scheduled formally by management. The Technology department meets with other departments, formal records of these meetings should be included in the subject department folder. Agendas for future meetings should include a section for teaching, learning and assessment to encourage greater dialogue and collaboration of best practice.
- Department planning is clear with individual schemes for each year group logically presented with the identification of learning outcomes, teaching methodologies and subject matter content. Planning student learning for the new specification in Applied Technology was also presented.
- The subject department should advance a strategic plan for the Technology subjects, this should include documenting evidence-based improvements in learner outcomes, using data obtained from subject department certificate examination results analysis, project work and other assessments.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the 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;