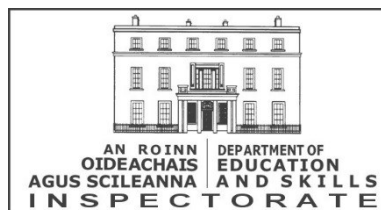


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Technology
REPORT

Saint Muredach's College
Ballina, County Mayo
Roll number: 64510J

Date of inspection: 11 April 2016



**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN TECHNOLOGY**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	11 April 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning in the lessons observed was of good quality overall with some scope for improvement identified in the areas of student engagement and collaborative learning.
- Good classroom management led to a positive atmosphere which supported learning.
- Students' literacy skills were supported by the appropriate use of subject terminology and clear explanations of key terms and concepts.
- Technology receives good support from school management.
- School management and the technology department have a clear vision to further advance and promote their subject within the school.
- Access to the subject is good, with option bands devised each year based on students' expressed preferences.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The use of a greater range of active teaching methodologies that appropriately challenge students should be used in all lessons.
- All lessons should be underpinned by explicit learning intentions to guide teaching and learning strategies and student assessment.
- While health and safety was to the fore throughout the inspection, safe operating areas (SOAs) should be immediately marked around all machines.
- School management and the subject department have a plan in place to introduce aspects of technology to the transition year (TY) programme; this is seen as a positive development.

INTRODUCTION

Saint Muredach's College is a long-established voluntary secondary school for boys which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killala. The school is one of three providers of post-primary education in Ballina and has an enrolment of 356 students. The school provides a broad curriculum including an optional TY.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching and learning in the lessons observed was of good quality overall with some scope for improvement identified in the areas of student engagement and collaborative learning.
- In some lessons there was an overemphasis on teacher exposition and students were largely passive. Lesson planning should provide for a balance between teacher instruction and a range of active learning strategies to engage and challenge students across the range of abilities.
- Whilst the content of most lessons was clear, it is recommended that the learning intentions are identified and shared in greater detail to guide lesson structure and focus student learning.
- In all lessons, content was delivered in a sequential manner that reinforced students' prior knowledge. Good practice was observed when students recalled the previous lesson's learning before progressing onto the topic at hand.
- In one senior cycle lesson, students transcribed extensive notes from the whiteboard into their copybooks. As an alternative to this practice, teaching students how to make their own notes using graphic organisers and short key-point summaries should be considered so that they are encouraged to learn in a more independent manner.
- Practical demonstrations were good. These demonstrations were often carried out for individuals or small groups as the teacher circulated the classroom. Students received advice and formative assessments orally at their desks and this approach worked well. Peer demonstration was used effectively in one lesson to reinforce learning and this methodology should be utilised to a greater extent.
- Well-established routines for everyday tasks, such as distribution of tools and materials and the organisation of group work, supported effective classroom management. The well-ordered learning environment facilitated easy interaction between students and teachers and supported an atmosphere that was conducive to learning.
- Questioning strategies were most effective when differentiated and targeted at named individuals. This good practice should be further implemented consistently across all lessons.
- Some good formative feedback was noted in copybooks. However, the more widespread and regular use of written comments toward improvement should be provided. Students should be encouraged to follow-up on corrections made by teachers and to evaluate their own work by identifying strengths and areas for improvement.
- Students' literacy skills were supported by the appropriate use of subject terminology and clear explanations of key terms and concepts.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Curricular provision for technology is good.
- School management and the technology department have a clear vision to further advance and promote their subject within the school. A plan is in place to include technology in the school's TY programme in the coming academic year and this will help to strengthen the subject's popularity among students.
- All students sample technology in first year. This worthwhile system enables students to base their optional subject choices on their experience of the subject. In senior cycle technology was offered for the first time this year. As is good practice, students preparing to enter fifth year are offered an open choice of optional subjects with subject bands then generated to accommodate these choices.
- Saint Muredach's College has been very successful in the worldwide 'Formula 1 in Schools' competition. Significant efforts from students and teachers have resulted in the school team reaching the world finals in September 2015, claiming third prize overall. This commitment to co-curricular learning is highly commended.
- There is regular formal assessment of students and parents are kept well informed on students' progress.
- While health and safety was to the fore throughout the inspection, SOAs should be immediately marked around all machines. The rationale for these SOAs and the implications for movement and behaviour in the vicinity of machines should be explained to students.
- A risk assessment of the technology room has been conducted and it includes the identification of hazards, the level of risk and the associated control measures. When the re-development of the technology room is complete, it is essential that a health and safety audit is carried out annually; and the associated report logged in the department planning folder.
- Good practice is followed with regard to the encouragement and support of teachers' continuing professional development.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation to support the teaching of technology is appropriate.
- There is a well-structured subject department in place which, commendably, embraces all the technologies. The subject department meets formally once a term. It is recommended that meeting minutes be retained in the planning folder and copied to senior management.
- Record keeping is effective. Communication with parents is supported through regular school reports, at parent-teacher meetings and through the students' journals.
- The technology department's schemes of work should be extended to include specific teaching and learning methodologies and assessment modes, which are linked to student learning intentions. The schemes should contain a teacher review section to evaluate the teaching approaches used.
- With plans in place to introduce technology into TY, a scheme of work which is aligned with the principles of TY needs to be developed.

- Certificate examination results are analysed to inform future planning. Further analysis could focus on identifying year-on-year trends, reflecting on the reasons for outcomes and planning strategies for improvement.

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; the board chose to accept the report without response.