

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Materials Technology (Wood)
and Construction Studies**

REPORT

Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin
An Cheathrú Rua, Contae na Gaillimhe
Roll number: 81012N

Date of inspection: 28 March 2012



A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING
IN MATERIALS TECHNOLOGY (WOOD) AND CONSTRUCTION STUDIES**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	28 March 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with the principal and the subject-teacher• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six class-periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to the principal and the subject-teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- In general, a high standard of teaching was observed and the gentle, relaxed atmosphere helped to put the students at ease and to facilitate their learning.
- Very effective integration of practical work and theory was observed.
- Beautiful rich oral Irish was used as the language of instruction, with subject specific terminology being presented effectively.
- The students showed a good understanding of their work and a broad range of project work was undertaken.
- Appropriate support is provided to help the students make the subject choice that suits them best.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that active teaching methods be further developed, as well as strategies to provide extra opportunities for the students to talk and discuss their work.
- Planning should be undertaken on strategies to promote students' literacy in written work and for the use of these strategies in all lessons.
- The good work done on the subject plan should continue, focusing now on specifying the teaching methods, resources, modes of assessment and expected learning outcomes relating to particular topics in the scheme of work.

INTRODUCTION

Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin is situated in An Cheathrú Rua, in Gaeltacht Chonamara. The Archbishop of Tuam, County Galway Vocational Education Committee and the Department of Education and Skills are the trustees of the school. Irish is the language of the school, used in administration, teaching and in communication with students and parents. There are 324 students, including both boys and girls, attending the school. Every student takes the Transition Year programme, with a Construction Studies (CS) module as part of the course. The school offers a full range of technologies, including Metalwork and Technical Graphics, as well as Materials Technology (Wood) (MTW) in junior cycle, and Engineering and Design and Communication Graphics (DCG) as well as CS in senior cycle.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- In general, a high standard of teaching was observed. To continue improving the teaching, however, it is recommended that active methodologies, including group-work and pair-work, be further developed. This kind of approach would provide extra opportunities for students to voice and discuss their opinions and to take a more active part in their own learning.
- It is also recommended that the expected learning outcomes be shared with the students at the start of every lesson, indicating clearly what the students should be able to do by the end of the lesson. The learning outcomes should be summarised at the end of each lesson, as a means of assessment and, in particular, to ensure that the students themselves are aware of what they have learnt.
- The teacher frequently integrated practical work with theoretical knowledge. Woodwork and construction skills were demonstrated with energy and specialist knowledge, which fostered students' interest in the subjects. Students were well prepared to undertake the practical work themselves and sufficient time was allowed for them to accomplish the targets set.
- The classroom was very well managed. Good communication between the teacher and the students, and among the students themselves, created a gentle, relaxed atmosphere which put the students at ease and facilitated their learning. Suitable routines were observed, which enhanced the organisation and order of the lessons.
- Assessment-for-learning strategies supported the students' learning. The students were regularly questioned, to ensure their understanding of the subject matter and their progress. It is recommended, however, that certain students be further challenged by developing and implementing higher-order questioning skills.
- The teacher monitored the students' practical work closely. A broad range of project work was observed which greatly enhanced the interest and experience of all the students. Students' knowledge of and interest in the subjects matched what might be expected from young people of their age-group and experience.
- The spoken language in the classrooms was rich, with subject-specific terminology being presented orally in an effective manner. It is recommended, however, that there should be further development of strategies to promote students' literacy in written work. Subject specific language and terminology should be displayed in writing in the learning environment.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE-SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Good practice is followed in the provision of MTW and CS for students, with a choice provided for every student in junior cycle and again in senior cycle. Support and information are provided systemically, for students and their parents, about the choice of subjects available to them. An opportunity is provided for every student to sample MTW in first year and to study CS in Transition Year. Students are given an open choice initially and subject option groups on the timetable are based on their choices.
- There is an improvement in the number of girls choosing the subjects, especially in junior cycle. The subject department and school management favour, and are supportive of, every student, whether girl or boy, making the individual choice most suited to them, and their good practice in this regard is commended.
- There is an appropriate allocation of time for these subjects on the timetable. Double class-periods are provided for every class-group, an arrangement which facilitates the completion of practical work.
- Formal assessment of the subjects is well organised. The subject department keeps to the written policy and to the assessment practices which are in place throughout the school. Continuous assessment is well organised, including class and topic tests, project work, portfolio work and homework.
- Resources, equipment and class materials are provided as needed. The teacher, as co-ordinator of the subject department, plans for requirements and requests of the principal the materials needed. The subjects are well supported and this system works well.
- Professional development is strongly supported in the school. The subject-teacher attended the series of in-service courses provided through the Technology Subjects Support Service, T⁴.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning for MTW and CS is well developed on a subject department basis. Meetings of the teachers of all the technology subjects are regularly convened. Agenda for these meetings are made available in advance. The co-operation which this integrated approach facilitates is commended. There is a written subject plan for MTW and CS. It is recommended, as a record, that copies of concise minutes of the meetings be attached to the subject plan.
- To continue the noticeably good work done on the subject plan, it is recommended that the planning focus should now be on providing a clear description of aspects directly related to teaching and learning. Regarding particular topics in the scheme of work, the plan should specify the following: teaching methodologies, resources, modes of assessment and expected learning outcomes. It is considered best to present these data in a compact tabular format. It is also recommended that the written CS module plan for Transition Year be further developed.
- The results of good planning and careful preparation were evident in the lessons observed. The lessons were coherent, developed with assurance and appropriately paced.
- The teacher follows good practice in keeping records of attendance and achievement. Students are kept informed about the system of assessment and about their own

achievement. Parents, too, are kept informed, as usual, through school reports, through comments written into the students' diaries and at parent-teacher meetings at which the teacher shares information with them.

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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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