

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

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

Borrisokane Community College
Borrisokane, County Tipperary
Roll number: 72370P

Date of inspection: 17 October 2011



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 CONSTRUCTION STUDIES
AND MATERIALS TECHNOLOGY (WOOD)**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	17 October 2011
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

- The quality of demonstration of woodwork skills by the teachers is high and may be further enhanced by facilitation of peer demonstration for reinforcement of learning.
- Student design is an integral part of all practical project work, in line with good implementation of the Materials Technology (Wood) (MTW) syllabus.
- Subject planning is of a high standard and the subject plan is a very well developed.
- The subject department has responded well to the recommendations of an earlier subject inspection report and recorded its progress in the subject plan.
- Provision for materials and resources is very good and the allocation of an annual budget facilitates effective planning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students should be provided with more opportunities to learn co-operatively, working in small groups on carefully organised tasks, particularly in theory lessons.
 - Consistent strategies should be used in all lessons to support students' literacy and numeracy development.
 - Care should be taken to avoid theory lessons that are excessively examination focused.
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INTRODUCTION

Borrisokane Community College provides a broad curriculum in a co-educational setting for second-level students from the town of Borrisokane and its surroundings. The technologies are well represented in the school's curriculum. Construction Studies (CS) is offered in the optional Transition Year (TY) programme and Graphics and Construction Studies (GCS) is offered in Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). With an enrolment of 501 students, the school is in the process of major refurbishment and construction of new facilities.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching was generally of good quality. Lessons were well paced, coherent and consistent in structure. While the teaching strategies used were effective, it is recommended that the range should be widened. In particular students should be facilitated more often to learn collaboratively through structured group-learning activities.
- Teacher demonstration was very effectively used for imparting woodwork skills. This aspect of teaching the subjects may be further enhanced by increasing the level of peer demonstration where some students have already developed an adequate proficiency. This approach should also be considered for demonstration to small groups in the course of lessons when the need for further instruction arises.
- The inclusion of student design as an integral part of all practical lessons from the beginning of the MTW course is commended. Learning should be further enhanced by encouraging students, from first year, to formally record their reasons for individual design decisions.
- Lesson aims were shared at the outset helping to prepare students for learning. These aims were quite general, however. Greater advantage should be gained by sharing the more detailed expected learning outcomes, which have already, in some cases, been linked to specific content in the programmes of work. Success in achieving these learning outcomes should then be reviewed at the end of lessons to further reinforce learning.
- There was evidence of effective learning. Students' answering of teachers' questions displayed growing knowledge and understanding. Occasionally students also asked interesting questions of their teachers. Further encouragement of student questioning should be considered, perhaps organising students in groups to compile questions to be answered by the class.
- The atmosphere in lessons was well balanced balance between informality and the imperative to learn. Good interpersonal relationships based on mutual respect supported effective learning and its evaluation. Classroom management was based on students' acceptance of clearly presented expectations of good behaviour. Correction, when needed, was sensitive. Good classroom organisation supported an effective learning environment. Sensible classroom routines facilitated recurrent activities such as the distribution and collection of equipment and materials.
- Opportunities were taken from time to time to reinforce the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. These opportunities occurred incidentally, however, without being planned or consistently developed. It is recommended that suitable strategies for literacy and numeracy development should be used in all lessons. Such strategies should be collaboratively identified by the subject department.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- MTW or CS are represented in each of the curricular programmes in the school. The time allocation for the subjects is generally good. It is recommended, however, that consideration be given to increasing the time allocated to GCS.
- Arrangements for student access to the subjects are optimal. All first-year students study MTW until Christmas while all TY students study a module of CS. In both junior cycle and senior cycle students are initially provided with an open choice. Subject bands are then based on the preferences expressed. Parents and students are well supported for subject choice. Meetings are provided with the principal, guidance counsellor and subject teachers. Students' choices are monitored and additional advice is given as needed.
- School-based term results combine continuous assessment marks for project work and term test marks. Specific details of the assessment procedure should be expanded in the subject plan. The proportion of marks for each element, agreed by the subject department, should be communicated to all students. The projected outcomes at the end of term should then be shared regularly with students as meaningful feedback to encourage further effort.
- Good provision is made for materials and equipment. New woodwork rooms are being provided in the next phase of the school building. There is an annual budget which encourages careful planning by the subject department. This aspect of subject provision is working well. Teachers have undertaken relevant professional development, including training provided through T⁴, the Technology Subjects Support Service.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Regular subject planning meetings take place, occasionally involving the teachers of all the technologies. Outcomes are recorded and shared with management. The role of subject co-ordinator rotates between the subject teachers. The subject department plan is a very well developed document which indicates the high standard of planning in this subject department. Good progress on the recommendations of an earlier subject inspection report is recorded in the subject plan.
- Comprehensive programmes of work link content with teaching methodologies and resources. The department is also tabulating specific learning outcomes linked to syllabus topics. It is suggested, as a means of further integration, that the student-design element of each project in MTW should be included in the programme of work.
- Effective planning for resources and sourcing of materials has led to a wider range of project types and increased interest by students. A wide range of teaching resources has been compiled which is catalogued in the subject plan. Advance planning for resources in the new rooms is underway.
- Individual planning for lessons is generally of a high standard. Care should be taken, however, to avoid excessive examination focus. The purpose of the short questions in Section A of the MTW certificate examination, to assess students' broad knowledge and understanding of the subject, should not be forgotten. Direct teaching of these questions from past examination papers should be avoided. Preparation of materials for lessons is of a high standard.

- Recording of and reporting on students' progress are well developed. Teachers record the attendance, progress and attainment of students and share this information at parent-teacher meetings. Other effective modes of communication with the home include school reports and notes in the student journal.

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

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcomes the subject inspection report's main findings and recommendations. The board are particularly pleased with the positive comments in relation to subject planning and the quality of teaching skills.

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

It is part of Borrisokane Community College's policy to further develop literacy, numeracy and co-operative learning across all subject areas during the school year 2012/2013.