

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

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

**Gairmscoil na bPiarsach
Ros Muc, County Galway
Roll number: 71380N**

Date of inspection: 15 May 2013



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	15 May 2013
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 four class-periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to the principal and the subject teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching of a very high quality was observed.
- Very good planning had been done for lessons and for the subject department.
- The school makes a wide range of technology subjects available.
- The school gives great support to Materials Technology (Wood) (MTW) and Construction Studies (CS).
- Cross-curricular co-operative planning is undertaken with the teachers of the other technology subjects.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that, in the subject plan, a more precise account be given of the modes of assessment used and of how the outcomes of continuous assessment are combined with other results.
 - There should be further development of a tabular layout, to achieve excellence in the subject plan.
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INTRODUCTION

Gairmscoil na bPiarsach is a post-primary school operating, at the time of the inspection, under the auspices of County Galway Vocational Education Committee (VEC), now known as Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB). Situated in Ros Muc in the Connemara Gaeltacht, the school provides a broad education for the young people of Ros Muc and the surrounding area. The school participates in the DEIS programme (Provision of Equality of Opportunity in Schools) and its tradition extends back a long way. There are eighty-five students on the school roll. The Transition Year Programme is not available in the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was very high. The range of woodwork skills being practised by the junior-cycle students was commendable. The students designed aspects of the projects on which they worked, including laminated bending, wood-turning and jointing of wood. The students showed a good understanding and a very good knowledge of the work they were doing. It was clear from their contact with the inspector that both junior-cycle and senior-cycle students were learning the subject well.
- A really calm atmosphere was created in the classroom. A compact disc was played to provide background music, which contributed greatly to keeping the students at ease while doing their work. This is good practice. The teacher's quiet, gentle contact and communication with the students encouraged them to learn. The woodwork room was well-organised and tidy, with plenty of printed material and safety notices on display. This good organisation provided a physical learning environment of a high quality for the students.
- Informal assessment methods were used integrated with the teaching. Questioning in particular was conducted in a natural but skilful way. These assessment practices were particularly helpful in stimulating students' interest, in acknowledging their efforts and in providing feedback for them on the progress they had made.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE-SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The school management and the VEC make every effort to provide a full curriculum for their students in Gairmscoil na bPiarsach. Technical Graphics and Metalwork are provided, as well as MTW, in the junior cycle, and Engineering and Design & Communication Graphics are provided, as well as Construction Studies, in the senior cycle. This is a very good service for the students of the locality.
- Sufficient teaching time, well distributed throughout the week, is allocated on the timetable, to present the syllabuses for MTW and CS effectively. Subject choice is organised fairly, to serve the interests of students. Very good advice and support is provided for students in first year and third year to assist them in making the most suitable choice of subjects for them. At the start of the junior cycle, students are offered a taste of every subject available to choose from. Subject bands are designed according to students' choices, as far as staffing constraints allow. This approach is commended, especially taking the size of the school into account.

- Good assessment practices are used in the school, with tests at the end of every term. In the areas of MTW and CS, the practical work undertaken in class is continuously assessed, in a way that is consistent with assessment in the state examinations. Students take mini-tests at the end of each topic in their learning of theory. It is recommended that these good assessment practices be described in the subject-plan, particularly the ways in which the outcomes of continuous assessment are combined with the end-of-term results. Students should be kept abreast of how this works, to give them every encouragement.
- Resources for the subjects are appropriately provided. Every opportunity for professional development in the technologies is availed of and the sessions undertaken in recent years are listed in the subject plan. As well as sessions provided through the Support Service for the Technology Subjects (T⁴), a further wide range was availed of and this is commended.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- In planning for, and review of, both the subject department and the subject plan, good practice is followed. Formal meetings are convened, which are included in the school's yearly programme, to do the subject planning. Cross-curricular planning is undertaken with the teachers of the other technology subjects, frequently at informal meetings during the year. This co-operative approach is commended.
- Very good work has been done on planning for the subject department. The written plan gives an account of the programmes of work, the methods of teaching, assessment and reporting, among other elements of the work. Long-term planning is presented in tabular form. To achieve excellence in this area, it is recommended that this tabular approach be further developed. Consideration should be given to including separate columns in the table for specific content, expected learning outcomes, teaching methodologies, modes of assessment and teaching resources to be used in teaching that specific content. This layout would facilitate access to planning details, as well as making it easier to review and amend the plan.
- It was evident during the inspection that detailed planning is undertaken for the provision of resources and suitable equipment that will develop and facilitate the teaching of the subjects. The results of good planning and preparation for individual lessons were observed during the inspection. It is obvious that planning of the highest order is done at this level.
- Good practices are followed regarding recording and reporting. Regular records are kept of students' progress, their examination results and their attendance. These records are shared with parents in school reports, at parent-teacher meetings and through the student diaries. Feedback is provided for students orally and in notes on their homework, as well as in the results of continuous assessment and of end-of-term tests, which are formally provided for them.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, the deputy principal and the subject teacher 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

Gairmscoil na bPiarsach, Ros Muc and the Galway /Roscommon Education and Training Board welcome this report on the subject inspection of Construction Studies and Materials Technology (Wood) as an opportunity to assess the work practices of the school. We are pleased that this report is complimentary overall regarding work methods in the above subject. We thank the inspector for the good advice and the support he provided in the course of the inspection. The Gairmscoil is very proud of the good atmosphere that prevails between the students and the teaching staff of the school, which helps us to provide high-quality education for our school community.

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 recommendations of this report will be discussed at the meeting of the school's teaching staff at the beginning of December 2013. It will be requested of the teachers that the recommendations of this report will be implemented in their subject plans before the beginning of February 2014.

A report on this will be presented to the Board of Management at the meeting in May 2014.

This is a translation of the School Response submitted by the Board of Management.