

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

Coláiste Chomáin
Ros Dumhach, County Mayo
Roll number: 72140V

Date of inspection: 3 December 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 CONSTRUCTION STUDIES
AND MATERIALS TECHNOLOGY (WOOD)**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	3 December 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with the principal and the subject-teachers• 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-teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- A very high standard of teaching was observed in all the lessons inspected.
- There has been a significant development in the use of active teaching methods.
- Great progress has been made in recent years in the improvement of students' Irish-language skills.
- The teachers co-operate really effectively to share good practice in teaching and to strive for improvement.
- It is commended that there has been an increase in the number of girls choosing to study Materials Technology (Wood) (MTW).
- To enhance the good practice already in use in subject-department planning, it is now time to consider rotating the role of co-ordinator, with all teachers assuming the responsibility in turn.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students' use of the computer-aided design programme *SolidWorks* for both MTW and Construction Studies (CS) should be developed.
 - It is recommended that the layout of the written subject plan be rearranged, particularly the aspects directly related to teaching and learning.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Chomáin is a Gaeltacht school located in Ros Dumhach in the Erris Gaeltacht in north-west Mayo. It is a co-educational second-level school operating, at the time of the inspection, under the trusteeship of Mayo Vocational Education Committee (VEC), now known as Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (ETB). There are 45 students enrolled. The school enjoys DEIS status (Delivering Educational Inclusion in Schools). The Transition Year programme is provided on an optional basis in the school. A full range of technology subjects is provided, with Metalwork and Technical Graphics, as well as MTW, available in the junior cycle, while Engineering, Design and Communication Graphics, as well as CS, are available in the senior cycle.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- A very high standard of teaching was observed in all the lessons inspected. The teaching methodologies used were focused on providing active learning opportunities for the students.
- An excellent learning environment is created for the subjects, based on appropriate classroom management, with first-class interpersonal communication being maintained between teachers and students and among the students themselves. The teachers organised groupwork for the students and managed that work closely and effectively.
- It was evident in the lessons observed that the students were learning well. Their answers and their understanding of the work indicated their experience of learning in the subjects. Two lessons in the junior cycle dealt with design. These lessons, in which the students showed a very good grasp of the basic principles of design, indicated that there was continuity in learning, in this aspect of the course specifically.
- There was an appropriate emphasis on assessment in the lessons. Assessment-for-learning methods were used, woven into the work of the lessons and into the active teaching methodologies in use.
- Great progress has been made in recent years in the area of students' Irish-language skills. The whole junior cycle now operates through the medium of Irish and it is planned to run this improvement through into fourth year in the coming year. Students' literacy and numeracy development was appropriately emphasised, using printed material and lists of key-words, as well as the teachers' accuracy in speech, to reinforce students' learning of Irish.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Good practice operates regarding student access to MTW and CS. The school curriculum makes these subjects available, as an option, for every student. There is a fair and balanced system of subject choice in operation. A 'taster' course in MTW is provided for first-year students, to support them in making their choices. In the optional Transition Year, every student studies a course in CS for the year. This experience helps them make informed subject choices for the senior cycle. It is commendable that the number of girls choosing MTW in the junior cycle has increased this year. This reflects well on the system of choosing subjects.

- An appropriate timetable is provided for the subjects. At least one double class period per week is made available for each class-group, an arrangement which facilitates the completion of practical work.
- The subject department follows the assessment policy of the school. The students take house examinations at Christmas and before the summer break. Besides this assessment, the students take other examinations according to the plan of work drawn up for each year group. Theory, design and practical work are tested in these exams. This is good assessment practice.
- Resources – both materials and equipment – are systematically provided as requested by the subject-department co-ordinator. Although this supply-system works effectively, it would, perhaps, be worth initiating a budgeted system as part of the subject-planning, later on.
- To achieve excellence in the development and use of resources, it is recommended that students' use of the computer-aided design programme *SolidWorks*, in studying MTW and CS, be further developed.
- The teachers in the subject department are significantly involved in professional development. This involvement embraces both professional development related directly to their subjects, provided through the technology subjects support service, T⁴, and professional development targeted specifically at teaching and learning, post-graduate study included.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A high degree of good practice is followed in subject-department planning. The teachers of the technologies and Home Economics co-operate in planning and in reviewing the subject departments. Teacher co-operation in subject-planning is of considerable help in achieving progress in teaching and learning. To further improve the planning, it is recommended that the teachers consider rotating the role of the co-ordinator, each teacher assuming the responsibility in turn.
- The written plan in operation for the subjects is comprehensive and accurate in following the syllabuses. It is recommended that the next step in developing and reviewing the plan would be the re-arrangement of the programme of work and other elements directly related to teaching and learning. It is recommended that these be presented in tabular form, with columns for specific content, expected learning outcomes, teaching methodologies, modes of assessment and resources to be used in teaching the specific content. This layout will facilitate access to planning details, as well as aiding the review and improvement of the plan.
- It is commendable that teaching resources for the subjects have been uploaded to a server on the school computer system. At the time of the evaluation, the school was about to introduce the *Moodle* system. This step forward shows how committed the school staff and management are to developments aimed at promoting student learning.
- A high level of individual planning is done by the teachers in the subject department. The signs of good planning were evident in the lessons and it was obvious that specific objectives had been laid out; these were achieved, and then reinforced at the conclusion of each lesson.

- The teachers keep comprehensive records of students' attendance and progress. This information is shared with parents in school reports and at parent-teacher meetings. Student diaries are used to maintain regular contact with their homes.

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