

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

**Beneavin De La Salle College
Finglas, Dublin 11
Roll number: 605110**

Date of inspection: 21 March 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 MATERIALS TECHNOLOGY
(WOOD) AND CONSTRUCTION STUDIES

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	21 March 2011
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and 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 principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- In all lessons observed, the teaching and learning was of a high standard.
- Teacher-student interactions were engaging, purposeful and mutually respectful.
- There is continuous assessment of class work and students' projects in MTW and Construction Studies (CS).
- The room available for the teaching of the subjects is neat, tidy and well organised and the subject department is appropriately resourced with materials.
- Some of the students studying Materials Technology Wood (MTW) do not receive an appropriate time allocation for the teaching and learning of the subject.
- Planning for the subjects is progressing well but the schemes of work within these plans need development.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- A text-rich environment should be created as a support for the development of literacy levels in the school with new terminology and key words displayed prominently in the classroom.
 - A more formal approach of combining the continuous assessment of homework, project work and portfolio work with formal test results should be adopted.
 - The time allocation for the teaching of MTW should be increased to four periods per week for all class groups.
 - The layout of the schemes of work should be revised so as to identify the student learning outcomes, teaching and learning resources available, the proposed teaching methodologies and the possible assessment methods for each topic.
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INTRODUCTION

Beneavin De La Salle College is an all-boys voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 481 students. It participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan. MTW and CS are offered as optional subjects in the Junior Certificate (JC) and Leaving Certificate (LC) programmes respectively. Transition Year (TY) is not offered to students in the school. 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.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Lessons observed had clear learning outcomes which were shared orally with the students at the outset. The teacher is encouraged to write these aims on the whiteboard where they can be displayed throughout the lesson.
- Continuity with previous learning was assured by means of well-paced introductions to the lessons.
- Subject-specific terminology was used continually by the teacher during lessons. Students were encouraged to communicate using this terminology. This practice enhanced both teaching and learning.
- As a support for literacy, any new terminology encountered during a lesson should be written and displayed either on the whiteboard, or on a flip chart or a poster. These new words should be recorded by students in their copybooks.
- In one lesson observed, the teacher drafted a scaled drawing of a building detail on the whiteboard. Care should be taken to ensure, when modelling such activities, that the teacher's work is drawn to scale and kept in proportion.
- A mixture of global and directed questions was used to revise previous work, to introduce new topics, and to direct student attention. While effective questioning techniques were utilised to ascertain students' levels of understanding there is opportunity for greater use of higher-order questions in all lessons.
- Demonstrations observed during an MTW lesson were of a high quality. Instructions were clear and the teacher made deliberate efforts to integrate theoretical information into these demonstrations.
- Good support is provided to CS students through the provision of model answers. These solutions are generally distributed at the start of the lesson. It would be preferable to give the students an opportunity to formulate their own proposed solutions to questions before the distribution of such model answers.
- There is some continuous assessment of class work and students' projects in MTW and CS. This should be broadened to include the full range of students' work. Structures should be established to facilitate the allocation of a percentage of marks from such continuous assessment towards students' formal test results.
- The atmosphere in the classrooms visited was positive and encouraging. A good rapport was evident between teachers and students. Students engaged well with lesson activities and received appropriate affirmation.

- Teacher movement throughout the classroom during the different lessons observed helped to keep students on task and provided the teacher with opportunities to give individual tuition when needed.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- First-year students experience optional subjects during a short sampler programme which ends at the mid-term break in October. This is a valuable means of support for students in making their subject choices.
- Senior-cycle students choose their optional subjects from a list of available subjects. Subject option bands are then generated to best accommodate their preferences.
- Most junior-cycle students receive an allocation of three periods per week for MTW. This time allocation is insufficient for the completion of the syllabus. It is recommended that this time allocation be increased to four periods per week.
- All MTW and CS classes are of mixed ability and access to higher and ordinary level is accommodated within class groups.
- The school has recently been refurbished and the room available for the teaching of the subjects is spacious, well organised and well equipped. The learning environment should now be improved through the organised display of student projects, photographs, scale drawings and working drawings produced using *SolidWorks*.
- Formal assessments are held in November and summer with “mock” examinations held for examination year groups in the spring. Reports are sent home after each assessment and there is one parent-teacher meeting held annually for each year group.
- The teacher has attended sessions of the programme of continuing professional development (CPD) made available through the Technology Subjects Support Service (t4) and has also availed of whole-school in-service related to behaviour management.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Teachers of the technology subjects meet formally, as a group, once per term. Records of these meetings are retained.
- The planning documents broadly follow the SDPI template and contain schemes of work outlining topics to be covered for each year group during the course of their studies. These programmes of work need to be developed. For each topic to be covered details should be given on learning outcomes, resources, suitable teaching methodologies and proposed methods of assessment.
- When planning for MTW, the subject department is encouraged to place a greater emphasis on the development of the students’ understanding of the design process and their ability to produce a project write-up which follows the State Examinations Commission guidelines.
- Lessons were well planned with the necessary classroom resources prepared in advance. There was also evidence of a wide range of information and communications technology (ICT) resources available to enhance teaching and learning.

- A safety audit has recently been carried out by the subject teacher. It is recommended that the checklists used should be signed, dated and retained with an additional copy provided to management. This work on safety is supported by a teacher-prepared safety document which is concise and well presented.
- The results achieved in state examinations are not currently analysed or compared to national norms. The subject department is encouraged to begin such an analysis so as to inform future planning and to identify trends in the uptake of higher level.
- The teacher's records confirmed regular monitoring of student attendance and achievement. These records are carefully maintained and form the basis of reports to parents following formal school assessments.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the subject teacher at the conclusion of the evaluation.