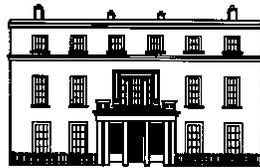


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

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

**Saint Paul's Secondary School
Monasterevin, County Kildare
Roll number: 61702D**

Date of inspection: 12 March 2014



**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	12 March 2014
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 five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching ranged from good to very good and there were a number of very effective active learning strategies observed.
- Design was a central focus in line with the intentions of the syllabuses.
- Very good provision is made for subject choice.
- The subject department plan provides a very good basis for further development.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Collaborative learning, group work and peer demonstration should be used more.
 - Some students should be provided with greater challenge in project work and all should be given accurate guidance in relation to completion of certificate examination coursework.
 - The length and frequency of students' contributions in class should be extended to more fully develop their oracy skills.
 - Supervision of scroll saw use in an adjacent room should be addressed.
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INTRODUCTION

St Paul's is a co-educational voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. The technologies are suitably well represented in the curriculum with Technical Graphics offered in addition to Materials Technology (Wood) (MTW) in junior cycle and Design and Communication Graphics (DCG) offered in addition to Construction Studies (CS) in senior cycle. The school participates in DEIS, the *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* action plan. An optional Transition Year (TY) programme is offered. The enrolment of the school was 301 at the time of the inspection.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The teaching observed ranged from good to very good. There were instances of very effective group work strategies being used, including students working in teams in senior cycle to actively revise learning. It is recommended that opportunities to involve students in group learning be further developed across all lessons.
- The teaching approach observed in practical lessons, predominantly teacher demonstration followed by monitored student work, was effective. Peer demonstration, as students develop skills, should be used to add variety and further reinforce learning. The direct teaching of exact, detailed processes and procedures in marking out, cutting, paring and assembly should be applied in all cases to demonstrating and monitoring the correct setting and use of hand tools.
- There was some effective differentiation in the project work being undertaken, most notably as students approached the certificate examinations. Creative design was an integral part of teaching in line with the intentions of the syllabuses. It is recommended, however, that further differentiation of design project work be used to increase the level of challenge for more able students.
- Integration of theory and practical work was a good feature of the practical lessons. This can be further expanded with additional time provided to explore more fully aspects that arise naturally in the course of lessons.
- A very good learning environment was maintained with good classroom management and clear routines. Interpersonal communication was respectful and unstrained. Students were at ease and learnt effectively.
- There was some informal assessment of students' learning, often through teacher questioning. This should be developed further. In particular, students should be provided with more opportunities for self-assessment. Students engaged in coursework should engage in regular self-recording of progress towards the targets set at the planning stage. A project diary should be kept and filled in at the end of each work session. This is a very effective means of assuring timely completion of projects for the certificate examinations. Care should be taken to inform students of coursework submission dates.
- Development of students' literacy skills was integral to teaching, particularly in the learning of terminology related to tools and processes. It is recommended that more extended oral contributions by students be encouraged. Such encouragement should take advantage of opportunities for students to present their own reflections on their work, such as those that arise from discussion of progress in all stages of design projects. This can be linked to the keeping of a project diary which was referred to earlier.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The range of educational programmes provided by the school meets students' needs and provision for subject choice is very good. Supports and guidance for students making subject choices are effective. First-year students sample all subjects in the first term. Before entry to fifth year, parents and students are provided with information on curriculum and subject options. TY includes a module of CS. Optional-subject bands are based on the preferences of the students in line with accepted good practice.
- Timetabling practice is good. Sufficient time is allocated in a combination of single and double lessons thereby facilitating project work. Class contact is provided on three days each week.
- Formal assessment is well developed and follows school policy. The customary examinations are held at Christmas and in summer with pre-examinations for the certificate examination classes. Continuous assessment takes account of progress in design project work and topic tests.
- Ongoing formative assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. Teacher questioning and oral feedback to students are applied systematically in line with assessment for learning principles adopted by the school.
- Equipment and materials are supplied as requested by the teacher. There is an annual budget which aids good planning for the acquisition of resources. The subjects are well resourced. Access to and use of information and communication technology (ICT) is very good. However, students of MTW should be introduced to SolidWorks, available in the DCG room, early in their studies.
- Good use is made of the small, well organised woodwork room. The physical learning environment is good. Issues of health and safety are dealt with effectively with a current subject-department health and safety statement in place. This statement should be appended to the school's health and safety statement, which should be reviewed annually in line with the *Guidelines on Managing Safety and Health in Post-Primary Schools*.
- The small room adjoining the woodwork room containing scroll saws does not allow for adequate supervision. This room should be opened up to provide clear sightlines or the saws be relocated to the woodwork room.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department planning is well developed. The written plan is a very good basis for further development. Informal collaboration with the graphics department is a strength of planning. This collaboration should be further developed and formalised.
- It is advised that the subject plan be rearranged in tabular format under headings such as topic, learning outcomes, resources, methodologies and assessment. This layout supports more detailed planning for teaching specific topics and also facilitates ease of editing at review stage.
- It is recommended that the continuous assessment modes be detailed in the subject plan and be clarified for students. The proportion of marks to be awarded for elements such as creativity, planning and realisation should be defined. Students should then be given regular feedback to support them in their learning.

- Individual teacher planning and preparation, record keeping and reporting to parents were effective. The proposed electronic access for parents will further improve the quality of reporting. A section of the student journal that facilitates personal review and target setting is a valuable innovation that promises to further enhance students' awareness, confidence and self-directed learning.

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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Published November 2014

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 of St Paul's Secondary School welcomes this report by the Inspectorate. The Board of Management wishes to thank the inspector for a thorough inspection and for the complimentary and constructive feedback.

The Board of Management recognises the very good whole school provision for the subject. The Board of Management commends the dedication and commitment of the Construction/MTW teacher to the improvement of the subject and to the improvement in outcomes for the students.

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 seating arrangement has been arranged so that more able and less able students are paired together. This encourages peer learning and constructive advice. Lessons incorporate a more diverse learning experience, particularly through the use of group work and problem solving activities.
- Project work is designed to engage students of varying abilities. Each project has an element of individuality to allow advanced students an opportunity to apply varying skills that will suit the project design through the use of lathe work, pyrography, carving, etc. Junior and Leaving Cert Completion dates are clearly visible in the classroom and students will be constantly made aware of these completion dates.
- Theory classes appeal to varying learning styles and questioning will include higher and lower order questions with a focus on extended answers from students to maximise their knowledge, understanding and explanatory skills.
- Scrolls saws have been moved to a different location to ensure students the safe supervision and work of the students is maintained in the classroom and that their work is constantly monitored and supervised/
- Scheme of work is currently being rearranged into tabular form to accommodate; Topic Learning Outcomes, Resources, Methodologies and Assessment.
- Each Junior and Leaving Cert student is provided with a portfolio folder that they continuously use in conjunction with their project work so an accurate record of their completion progress is continuously being updated during each lesson.