

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**Carndonagh Community School  
Carndonagh, Co. Donegal  
Roll number: 91406R**

**Date of inspection: 4 May 2011**



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

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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	4 May 2011
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The teaching and learning, in all lessons observed during the inspection, was very good.
- Students' practical work, written work and drawings are monitored regularly.
- The subject department is well equipped, organised and resourced. Classes are well distributed across the week and for most year groups, time allocation is good.
- Appropriate emphasis was placed on health and safety issues throughout the lesson periods observed.
- Planning for the subjects is very well progressed with detailed schemes of work for all year groups included in the planning folder.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- As a further support for the development of literacy levels in the school, new terminology and key words should be displayed prominently in the classroom.
  - More written feedback should be provided to students on their class work, portfolio work and homework in keeping with assessment for learning (AfL) principles.
  - Materials Technology Wood (MTW) should receive an overall allocation of time equivalent to four periods per week over the three years of the junior cycle.
  - To build on existing good health and safety practices a regular safety audit of the room should be carried out by the teachers.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Carndonagh Community School participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan. It currently caters for 944 students: 467 boys and 477 girls. MTW is offered as an optional subject in the Junior Certificate (JC) programme and Construction Studies (CS) is offered as an optional subject in both the Leaving Certificate (LC) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). Students following the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme may study Graphics and Construction Studies (GCS) as one of their vocational specialisms. A module on wood craft forms part of the school's optional Transition Year (TY) programme. 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.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The lessons observed were well structured with the aims displayed on the whiteboard and shared with the students at the outset. This is good practice.
- Teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good.
- Questioning was used to link lessons to previous learning, to assist in focusing students' attention and to support their learning. Students were encouraged to think for themselves through open-ended questioning and were affirmed for their efforts.
- There should be an increased emphasis on the development of sketching skills across all year groups as it forms an integral part of the assessment of these subjects in certificate examinations.
- It is recommended, as a support for literacy, that new terminology encountered during a lesson be written and displayed on the whiteboard or some other suitable medium and that these words be recorded by students in their copybooks.
- Good use was made by teachers of the chalkboard and information and communication technology (ICT) to focus students' attention and support their learning.
- Instructions delivered during demonstrations were clear and concise. Subject specific terminology and theory were well integrated into these demonstrations.
- Teachers were facilitating and managing the task of completing large numbers of individually-designed projects very well.
- Theoretical lessons were well linked to students' day-to-day experiences. This enhanced their understanding of the lesson content.
- From observation of students' journals, it was clear that the amount and frequency of students' homework assignments vary across year groups. Homework supports the work students do in school and should be assigned to all year groups on a regular basis.
- It is recommended that there be an increase in the quantity and quality of constructive and affirmative written feedback provided to students on their work, in keeping with AfL principles.
- Consideration should be given to the combining of outcomes from continuous assessment with results from formal tests held in November, February and the summer. The

aggregation of results from practical work, end of topic tests and formal written tests is compatible with the aims of the subject syllabuses.

- A good teacher-student rapport was evident during all lessons evaluated. This created an atmosphere where students enthusiastically engaged with lesson activities.

#### **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Good support is provided for students and parents at times of transition through the provision of information evenings, individual interviews, talks from subject teachers, the sampling of option subjects in first year and an information booklet for first-year students providing guidance on subject choices.
- Due to the arrangement for sampling subjects in first year, students only receive three periods of MTW per week. This shorter contact time in first year results in an inadequate overall time allocation for teaching and learning over the junior-cycle years. It is recommended that the school investigate the introduction of a shorter sampling period of optional subjects for first-year students.
- Opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) have been fully embraced. All members of the department have attended in-service training provided by the Technology Subjects Support Service (t4). In addition to this, whole-school CPD has recently been provided on strategies to promote literacy development across all subject areas.
- The two rooms used for the teaching and learning of the subjects are well equipped, neat and tidy. Some students' practical project work is displayed with photographic exhibits of other project work outside the rooms and on the school website. This is good practice.
- The subject department is well resourced with materials, machines and portable power tools. Good ICT resources are available in both rooms.
- Standard warning signage is displayed prominently with specific safe use rules displayed adjacent to machines. Safe operational areas (SOAs) are also clearly marked. To compliment this existing good practice it is recommended that a regular safety audit of the room be carried out by members of the subject department with the safety checklists signed, dated and copied to management.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The subject has a co-ordinator in place and formal subject planning meetings are held once per term. Minutes of these meetings are retained and copied to management.
- Subject department planning follows the SDPI template and is very well progressed.
- The schemes of work contain details on topics to be covered, learning outcomes and proposed methods of assessment. To further improve on this good work it is suggested that, for each topic, the resources available be listed as well as the most successful teaching methodologies. The cataloguing of resources will assist in identifying subject topics where more resources need to be developed.
- The skills needed to produce a written project portfolio are currently not developed until third year. It is recommended that students gain experience in writing project portfolios,

in line with certificate examination requirements, during first year and second year and that this should be done in tandem with practical project work.

- It is recommended that the subject department plan contain a long-term planning section. Within this section consideration could be given, for example, to the display of students' projects, the best use of spare rooms within the department and the gender balance within the subject.
- The subject department has developed a workbook for first-year students. This is a commendable initiative.

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

# **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 at its meeting of 25<sup>th</sup> August accepted the Report. The Board wishes to acknowledge the quality of teaching and learning recognised during the inspection and records their appreciation to the Inspector for the courtesy and professionalism of his engagement with the school management and teachers, and for the guidance received during the inspections.

The observations under 'Teaching and Learning', 'Subject Provision And Whole School Support' and 'Planning And Preparation' are very fair and reflect the work that has been put in to promoting the practical subjects by both Staff and Management. The Board notes the emphasis on Assessment for Learning principles.

### **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 teachers have already updated the displays of student work in both the School Website and Display Cases.

A 'Safety Audit' template will be used to update the Safety Statement in the next term. In the upcoming Department meetings it is proposed to further progress the methods of Student Assessment.

'Key Words' are being actively used to promote Literacy in the subjects and improved display of these will be pursued.

The Board will discuss the comments on 'Gender Balance' and 'Timetable Allocation' as these have implications for the Whole School.