

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

**St Brigid's College
Loughrea, County Galway
Roll number: 71280J**

Date of inspection: 22 February 2016



**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	22 February 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Overall, the quality of learning and teaching ranged from good to very good.
- Learning took place in a very positive, well-disciplined environment during all lessons evaluated.
- The Materials Technology (Wood) (MTW) and Construction Studies (CS) subject department is well organised and has good whole-school support through the provision of time, resources and equipment.
- The majority of students take higher-level examinations in MTW and CS and attainment rates are good at both higher and ordinary levels.
- The subject department has been proactive in driving a vision to promote MTW and CS within the school.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Specific learning intentions should be shared with students at the outset and reviewed at the end of all lessons.
 - It is recommended that there be an increase in the written developmental feedback provided to students on their work, in keeping with *Assessment for Learning* (AfL) principles.
 - While health and safety was to the fore throughout the inspection, safe operational areas (SOAs) should be immediately marked around all machines.
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INTRODUCTION

Saint Brigid's College is a co-educational school under the auspices of the Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board. The school has a current enrolment of 622 students. The programmes offered are the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the established Leaving Certificate. The school also offers a range of adult education and Post Leaving Certificate courses.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in MTW and CS ranged from good to very good with many instances of commendable practice. In a small number of lessons the use of a greater range of active teaching methodologies that appropriately challenge students should be used.
- All teachers began by establishing the lesson aims and objectives. To further develop this, specific learning intentions should be shared with students at the outset and reviewed at the end of all lessons.
- Very effective student-centred teaching approaches, including group work and pair work, were utilised in most lessons. This empowered students to work collaboratively to discuss and share ideas and to find solutions to problems.
- During a CS lesson observed, a model of a roof detail was used to assess students' baseline knowledge and provide a foundation for new learning. The use of such resources is commended as it effectively links theoretical learning with the practical applications of the subject.
- Learning took place in a very positive, well-disciplined environment during all lessons evaluated.
- The terminology associated with MTW and CS was emphasised continually during lessons. This allowed students to listen to instructions while assimilating subject-specific terminology. Significant attention to literacy and numeracy was apparent in both the written documentation provided at the time of the inspection and in practice. Teachers discussed and explained keywords and encouraged students to use them in their responses to questions.
- Questioning was well utilised to assess students' understanding of key concepts, to improve their overall understanding of topics and to consolidate learning. Student responses were affirmed and developed further when necessary.
- Evidence of self-assessment and peer-assessment practice was observed in one lesson. This practice, which supports students in taking an active role in their own learning, is commended. Opportunities to utilise these assessment strategies to a greater extent should be sought.
- Good levels of work were evident in students' copybooks and folders. Much of this work was supported by worksheets and handouts. 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.
- A range of visual and written materials, including information and communications technology (ICT), was used to communicate lesson content. ICT was most effective in

supporting student learning when it was incorporated throughout the lesson to highlight important points and to provide visual images for the learner.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- MTW and CS are very well supported by school management.
- Students' access to MTW and CS was found to be equitable and fair. Time provision for the subjects is very good with class periods well distributed across the week. All classes are of mixed ability and the uptake of MTW and CS at higher level is very good, as are subsequent outcomes in certificate examinations.
- Teachers of MTW and CS have a significant range of resources to support teaching and learning at their disposal. A state-of-the-art school extension opened in September 2015 and includes a MTW lab, a preparation room, and Design and Communication Graphics room. A range of additional equipment has been purchased to facilitate the use of active learning methodologies and these resources were put to very good use in lessons observed.
- The teachers modelled best health-and-safety practices at all times and ensured that students did likewise through the close monitoring of all activities. However, the demarcation of SOAs around machines should be carried out urgently. The rationale for these SOAs should be explained to students.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation for the provision of MTW and CS is good.
- A subject co-ordinator is in place and regular subject planning meetings are facilitated.
- The minutes of these meetings are recorded and mostly relate to operational tasks such as class organisation and allocation of resources. As the department continues to develop, it is recommended that agenda items for meetings could include the sharing of effective teaching strategies for the teaching of various aspects of the MTW and CS curriculum.
- Teachers were very well prepared for lessons and record-keeping practices are good. Students' diaries indicate that homework is regularly assigned in the subjects.
- The MTW and CS teachers have a collaborative and collegial approach to subject planning and the plan itself is a well-developed document. To further improve on the schemes of work within these plans, it is recommended that greater detail be provided on learning intentions and associated modes of assessment.
- The MTW and CS teachers are progressive and have a clear vision to further develop and promote their subjects within the school. They engage with continuing professional development (CPD) and this complements the significant whole-school professional development in areas such as differentiation, resilience in schools and formative assessment. It is suggested that the CPD undertaken be recorded in the department plan.

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 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

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management and Staff of St Brigid's College welcomes the positive nature of this report. It reflects the professionalism, dynamics and vision of the school's Materials Technology and Construction department.

The Board of Management recognizes the excellent whole school provision for the subject and the high standards of teaching and learning that lead to excellent attainment in state examinations for all students.

The report highlights the excellent quality of the facilities and the positive atmosphere in the classroom, both of which enhance the learning experience for students.

The Board want to acknowledge the massive input of the teachers in the subject department in the development and delivery of the State of art facilities that are now available at St Brigid's College, Loughrea.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The Construction and Materials Technology(Wood) department having reviewed the inspectors report are currently working on the recommendations.

- Specific learning intentions will be shared with students at the outset and reviewed at the end of all lessons
- Feedback: Greater emphasis will be placed on recording written feedback on students work to compliment the oral feedback given,
- Health and safety of everybody is top priority in all classes and recommendation will be implemented.