

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Materials Technology (Wood),
Construction Studies, Technical Graphics
& Design and Communication Graphics**

REPORT

Coláiste Cholmcille
Indreabhán, Co. Galway
Roll number: 71250A

Date of inspection: 8 May 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
MATERIALS TECHNOLOGY (WOOD), CONSTRUCTION STUDIES,
TECHNICAL GRAPHICS & DESIGN AND COMMUNICATION GRAPHICS**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	8 May 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with the principal and subject-teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five class-periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to the principal and subject-teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- A good standard of teaching was observed, particularly in the practical lessons.
- Good practice was being followed in meeting students' additional educational needs.
- There was an excellent atmosphere in the classes, which facilitated effective learning among the students.
- Effective practices were observed to be in place, including well designed signage, to ensure health and safety in the classrooms.
- Good work has been done on the subject-plans, especially with regard to programmes of work.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is scope for further development in the use of active teaching methods in some lessons.
 - A co-ordinator should be appointed, in rotation, for a department of the technologies and the organisation of the department should be more formalised.
 - It is recommended as a next step in the development of the subject plan that the methodologies, teaching resources, expected learning outcomes and the assessment methods to be used in teaching the subjects be presented in outline in the plan.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Cholmcille is a co-educational Gaeltacht post-primary school, under the trusteeship of County Galway Vocational Education Committee. The school is located in Indreabhán and has an enrolment of 235 students, who come from the surrounding areas. The full range of technologies offered in the school includes Metalwork and Engineering as well as the subjects dealt with in this report: Materials Technology (Wood) (MTW) and Construction Studies (CS), Technical Graphics (TG) and Design and Communication Graphics (DCG). In the school's optional Transition Year programme, courses in DCG and CS are provided.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The standard of teaching was high, particularly in the practical lessons where the students worked on a wide range of projects and drawings. One of the teachers demonstrated practical skills to a high level, to small groups of students. This practical work was differentiated according to the ability of the learner.
- In a few other lessons, there was scope for further development of the use of active teaching methods. For example, when students were doing experiments, they could be set to work in small groups to design the experiment and achieve results on their own initiative. Such an approach would raise the level of challenge for the students, increasing their interest and thus improving their learning.
- In general, good practice is followed in meeting students' additional educational needs. The level of difficulty of work is frequently differentiated, to adapt it to the ability of the individual student. Good communication is initiated with the educational support-staff on a formal basis and informally during the year.
- An excellent atmosphere is created, based on mutually respectful interaction between teachers and students and among the students themselves, which helps put students at ease, thus facilitating their learning. Effective procedures enhance the order and flow of the lessons and the discreet and effective management of the students.
- Skilful questioning is well and regularly used to develop a lesson and ensure learning. It was observed that, in general, the students were learning effectively. Their knowledge of the subjects and their understanding of basic principles were as might be expected of students of their age and experience.
- The students were at ease with the specific terminology and particular language of the subjects. The teachers succeeded in effectively presenting this language orally with an appropriate emphasis on the learning of Irish. A print-rich environment for the subjects, with posters and signage, supported the development of students' language skills. To promote the students' literacy in written work, it would be worthwhile to be always mindful of developing further strategies.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The optional subjects are provided for the students in an appropriate and balanced way. Students are given an open choice at the beginning of first year and again on transferring to fifth year. Option bands are created based on students' choice in junior cycle and again in senior cycle, taking account of the teaching resources in the school.

- Support and information about the choice of subjects is provided, appropriately and systematically, for students and their parents. The optional Transition Year programme, with courses in CS and DCG, supports students in making their subject choices. It is a positive step that the management intends making MTW available shortly as part of the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) in the school.
- An appropriate allocation of time is provided for the subjects to allow for the completion of the respective syllabuses as planned. A double class period is provided for each class group, which facilitates the completion of practical work.
- Regular assessment is conducted which supports assessment for learning. It is recommended that more precise feedback on these continuous assessments be provided. The wireless computer infrastructure being developed in the school would, it is thought, be helpful in this regard. Development possibilities in this area should be investigated.
- The school supplies resources, equipment, and lesson materials as requested by individual teachers. Although there is no specific budget allocated for this, the subjects are well served and the system works effectively. As part of the planning for the subject-department, requests should normally be discussed before forwarding them to the school management.
- The management and trustees of the school effectively support the professional development of teachers. The subject-teachers attended the series of in-service courses provided by the Technology Subjects Support Service, T⁴.
- Effective practices are being implemented to ensure health and safety in the classrooms. To achieve the highest standards in this area, safe operational areas should be marked around the machines the students use. A sign should be provided to clarify the principle on which the safe-areas are based. It is advised that an annual review of the safety statement be conducted, as recommended in the documentation of the Health and Safety Authority.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- It was observed that subject planning was functioning for MTW, CS, TG and DCG, but this was usually on an informal basis. Meetings are held frequently, but there is no recording of agenda or minutes of meetings. Teachers of all the technology subjects meet on this basis.
- It is recommended that the subject department be more formally organised. It could be organised as a department of the technologies, with a technology teacher as co-ordinator or convenor, each teacher in turn assuming this responsibility for a year. It is recommended that an agenda be provided in advance for each meeting, that concise minutes be recorded and that both agenda and minutes be filed with the subject-plan.
- Subject-plans have been written for TG, DCG, MTW and CS. To build on the significant work done on these plans, it is recommended that attention be now focused on giving a precise account of aspects of the work directly related to teaching and learning. There are lists of topics in the schemes of work for each subject and the next step should be to give an account, in the subject-plan, of the teaching methodologies, resources, assessment methods and expected learning outcomes for the teaching of each of these specific topics. It is considered that this data is best recorded in compact tabular form.

- It is recommended that the Transition Year plan for DCG and for CS be developed further. It is also recommended that an account of the continuous assessment system be included in the subject-plans and clearly explained to the students and their parents.
- The result of good planning and careful preparation was observed in all the lessons. The development of the lessons was very astutely organised and implemented at an appropriate pace. To develop learning opportunities for the students further, however, the expected learning outcomes of the lesson should be clearly and precisely shared with the class at the outset. The expected outcomes should then be summarised at the end, to consolidate the learning.
- The teachers keep records of students' attendance and achievement. Parents are kept informed in the normal way. School reports are sent home after the house examinations. Students' diaries are used to exchange information with parents and parent-teacher meetings are organised, at which students' progress and other aspects of their learning are discussed.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.