

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

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

**St Paul's C.B.S.,
Brunswick Street, Dublin 7
Roll number: 604300**

Date of inspection: 2 February 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) AND CONSTRUCTION STUDIES**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	2 February 2012
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 the lessons observed, teaching and learning was good.
- The good rapport between the students and the teacher produced a positive classroom atmosphere which was conducive to learning.
- Subject theory was well integrated into practical lessons.
- Best health and safety practices were modelled by the teacher with the main safety points being consistently repeated to reinforce learning.
- The subject department is appropriately resourced through the provision of rooms, materials and equipment. Time allocation is good with classes evenly distributed across the week.
- Subject department planning is well progressed.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- A text-rich environment should be created in the workshop to support the development of literacy levels in the school.
 - There should be an increase in the quantity and quality of constructive and affirmative written feedback provided to students on their work.
 - Safe operational areas (SOAs) should be immediately marked around all machines and an annual safety audit should be carried out using a risks and hazards checklist.
 - A scheme of work needs to be developed for the Construction Studies (CS) module in Transition Year (TY). The other schemes of work should be further developed to integrate details on teaching resources, methodologies and assessment with the proposed student learning outcomes for each topic.
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INTRODUCTION

St Paul's Christian Brothers School participates in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. It currently caters for 248 male students. Materials Technology Wood (MTW) is offered in the Junior Certificate (JC) programme and CS is offered in the Leaving Certificate (LC) programme. TY is optional in the school and contains a compulsory CS module.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The proposed learning outcomes were shared orally with the classes. To build on this good practice, the learning outcomes should be displayed during the lesson to assist in keeping the work of the lesson focused, to assess progress and to aid recap.
- Classroom management techniques were very effective. Lesson pace was good and learning activities were suitably varied. A good teacher-student rapport was evident during all lessons evaluated. Both the teacher and the students showed great enthusiasm for the subjects.
- All lessons observed were practical woodwork lessons. Theoretical lessons are taught in a different room which has access to a chalkboard and a data projector. There was good evidence of information and communication technology (ICT) being used to help present these theoretical lessons and to support the development of knowledge and understanding.
- Appropriate principles and skills were introduced incrementally during lessons. While students worked on tasks, the teacher circulated among them, monitoring progress and providing additional support when this was required.
- A combination of global and directed questions was used. Questions were effectively differentiated which kept all students involved in learning. Students were affirmed for their contributions to the lessons.
- Demonstration was the main teaching methodology used. This was effectively managed. Students were included in the process through constant questioning and by being asked to carry out part of the demonstration. This good practice was particularly valuable in the context of the lessons, the realisation phase of projects.
- The integration of subject theory with the practical elements of the subjects was a strong feature of lessons and is commended.
- The teacher modelled best health and safety practices at all times and ensured that students did likewise through the close monitoring of all activities. Throughout lessons, the main safety points were consistently repeated to reinforce learning and ensure compliance with the good safety practices modelled.
- The teacher used and emphasised the terminology associated with MTW and CS during lessons. This practice enhanced both teaching and learning, enabling students to assimilate subject-specific terminology while working on their own tasks.
- As a support for literacy, new terminology encountered during a lesson should be written and displayed using a whiteboard or ICT and recorded by students in their copybooks. Efforts should also be made to create a text-rich environment through the labelling of tools and other equipment in the workshop.

- In one of the lessons observed, there were good examples of the implementation of numeracy supports.
- 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 assessment for learning (AfL) principles.
- There is continuous assessment of students' practical work in MTW and CS with oral feedback provided. It is recommended that the outcomes of these assessments be combined with formal test results at Christmas and summer.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The school provides a short sampling programme for first-year students during which they experience all the available optional subjects. This provision is commended. At the end of this period, option bands are generated to best suit students' preferences with MTW proving to be a very popular choice.
- Time allocation for the subjects is good across all year groups. MTW and CS classes are of mixed ability with access to higher and ordinary level accommodated within class groups.
- The teacher has availed of subject-specific training provided by the Technology Subjects Support Service (t4).
- The workshop is well equipped and has recently been upgraded. It accommodates up to eighteen students with a separate machines area and wood store. Good use of tool racks and storage presses ensures that the room is kept neat and tidy.
- The demarcation of SOAs around machines should be carried out urgently. The rationale for these SOAs and the implications for movement and behaviour in the vicinity of machines should be explained to students. Specific safe use rules should also be displayed adjacent to each machine.
- An annual safety audit of the workshop should be carried out by the subject department using a risks and hazards checklist. This document should be signed, dated and copied to management.
- Currently the workshop does not contain a whiteboard, chalkboard or data projector. This should be addressed immediately as the teacher needs a medium through which to display literacy supports, notes and sketches.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject planning meetings are regularly facilitated in the school. It is recommended that minutes of these meetings be retained in the planning folders and copied to senior management.
- Subject department planning is well progressed and follows the School Development Planning Initiative template. The planning folders are supported by two large folders containing hardcopies of ICT teaching resources.
- There is no written scheme of work for the CS module in TY. It is recommended that a scheme be formulated which reflects the ongoing good work in this area.

- To further improve on the schemes of work, it is recommended that greater detail be provided on teaching resources, methodologies and assessment and that these be more closely integrated with the proposed student learning outcomes for each topic.
- It is suggested that second-year students should be guided through the production of a project write-up which follows the State Examinations Commission guidelines. This would provide the students with valuable experience for their Junior Certificate assessment.

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; a response was not received from the board.