

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**Calasactius College  
Oranmore, County Galway  
Roll number: 63100I**

**Date of inspection: 09 March 2016**



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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	09 March 2016
<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 five class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was very high, with instances of exemplary practice noted in all lessons.
- There were high levels of active participation by students in lesson activities, with appropriate opportunities being provided for active learning and collaborative work throughout.
- A positive, supportive learning environment was facilitated in all lessons.
- The awareness and practice of *Assessment for Learning* (AfL) techniques was a positive aspect of the teaching observed.
- Subject provision and whole-school support for Materials Technology (Wood) (MTW) and Construction Studies (CS) is very good.
- Subject department planning is well established and MTW and CS teachers work in a collaborative and supportive manner.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The effective formative feedback observed in students' folders should also be applied consistently in student copybooks.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Calasactius College is a co-educational, secondary school that operates under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust). The school is located in Oranmore, County Galway and has an enrolment of 830 students. The programmes offered are the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the established Leaving Certificate.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good.
- In each lesson explicit learning intentions were shared and reviewed with students. These learning outcomes were both skill based and knowledge based. This integrated approach worked well and helped to reinforce learning through the practical application of knowledge.
- A variety of teaching strategies, such as pair and group work, were utilised to facilitate active learning. Clear instructions were given for activities with appropriate attention being given to safety during practical classes. To further develop this collaborative approach to learning, it is recommended that roles be assigned within each group, to provide structure and to ensure each student is aware of their individual responsibilities.
- Teachers' inputs and demonstrations were short and focused. This provided students with ample time to participate in lesson activities and to practise their design and manufacturing skills.
- Students participated in and contributed well to lesson activities. A lively dynamic pace was evident in lessons which stimulated and motivated students and their enjoyment of the subjects was tangible.
- There was a good focus on AfL in the majority of lessons with the use of traffic lights, show-me boards and think-pair-share activities. It is recommended that schemes of work, as contained in the department folder, be updated to reflect all the strategies being used.
- In all lessons observed the practice of students creating their own notes was very effective in building the students' note-making, as opposed to note-taking, skills.
- All teachers used information and communications technology (ICT) presentations and worksheets appropriately to enhance learning. The whiteboard was used very well by teachers to build diagrams and note key words during lessons.
- Teachers had suitably high expectations for students' engagement and participation and students, in turn, were mostly positive about their learning. Classroom atmosphere was very positive and this allowed for good progress to be achieved in all lessons.
- Effective formative comments were observed on students' folders. It is recommended that formative feedback should also be applied consistently in student copybooks.
- Strategies to enhance students' literacy and numeracy skills were integrated into lessons. Key words were emphasised and were contextualised for the topic being taught.

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

- Subject provision and whole school support for MTW and CS are very good.
- Time provision for the subjects is good with class periods well distributed across the week.
- First-year students make their choice of optional subjects prior to entry in September and there is scope to change their mind as necessary during the first term. As is good practice, students preparing to enter fifth year are offered an open choice of optional subjects with subject bands then generated to accommodate these choices.
- School management is very supportive of teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) and recent whole-school in-service for teachers has focused on AfL, ICT and modern teaching for modern learning. Individual teachers have undertaken a significant number of CPD courses in their own time including website design, leadership and ICT courses.
- There is very good provision of resources, inclusive of two dedicated MTW laboratories and a preparation room; all of which are well equipped with modern ICT facilities.
- Appropriate health and safety equipment is provided and a health and safety statement is in place. Safety audits of the rooms are carried out by the subject department using a risks-and-hazards checklist. The safety audit should be carried out annually and a copy of the associated report should be signed, dated and copied to management.
- There is continuous assessment of students' practical work in MTW and CS with oral feedback provided. As is good practice, the outcomes of these assessments are combined with formal test results at Christmas and summer.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject-department planning is well established. MTW and CS teachers work in a collaborative and supportive manner and are very committed to the continued development of the subjects.
- The MTW and CS department is co-ordinated on a rotating basis. Department meetings are held throughout the year and the minutes of these meetings are retained in the subject planning folder. It is recommended that future meetings should incorporate further discussion in relation to teaching and learning strategies so that the sharing of best practice becomes commonplace.
- Comprehensive programmes of work, structured in tabular form, link content with teaching methodologies and resources. It is suggested, as a means to further the effectiveness of the schemes, that information on timeframes be included and that a review section on each topic be incorporated, in order to evaluate the teaching approaches used.
- All lessons were well planned with a range of activities and resources prepared to engage students and support learning. In addition, teachers had planned carefully for students' conceptual understanding, through choosing effective tasks, examples and questioning strategies.
- Common examinations are used for each year group, which is good practice. All students are encouraged to take the higher-level papers in state examinations.

- Analyses of results in the certificate examinations are carried out annually and are recorded in the planning folder. To further develop this good practice, an action plan should be put in place to build on strengths and to address areas that may be identified for development. Details of the action plan should be recorded in the subject planning folder.

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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. 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 BOM welcomes this extremely complementary report. We welcome the recognition given to the high quality of teaching and learning and the active participation of students in their learning. The positive, supportive learning environment, the use of AFL and the collaborative and supportive approach of the teachers to their work is commendable. The whole school support for the subject area is valued. Our hope is that the extremely high standards that are in place will continue long into the future.