

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

**Saint Joseph's Community College
Carrigholt road, Kilkee,
County Clare
Roll number: 70880F**

Date of inspection: 18 April 2016



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

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	18 April 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

- The overall quality of learning and teaching in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good.
- The teaching approach observed in practical lessons, predominantly teacher demonstration followed by student work, was effective.
- There was very good evidence of differentiation, particularly when the teacher circulated during practical activities to meet the learning needs of students.
- A positive, supportive learning environment was facilitated in all lessons.
- Management is very supportive of the subjects and the department is well resourced.
- Materials Technology (Wood) (MTW) and Construction Studies (CS) are very popular in the school.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Peer demonstration, as students develop skills, should be used to add variety and further reinforce learning.
 - All lessons should be underpinned by explicit and differentiated learning intentions to guide teaching and learning strategies and student assessment.
 - To further support students' participation in their learning, more frequent use of directed questioning is recommended.
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INTRODUCTION

Saint Joseph's Community College, which operates under the auspices of Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, has a current enrolment of 144 students. Following junior cycle, students can opt for either the established Leaving Certificate or the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in all lessons observed ranged from good to very good.
- The range of teaching methods observed included very effective teacher demonstration and group work. Demonstrations were well paced and structured to encourage student participation. Peer demonstration should be used to further increase student involvement, particularly when reinforcing techniques taught previously.
- Student learning was of a high quality in lessons where teachers gave responsibility to students to lead their own learning. In these lessons, students also had very good opportunities to develop their higher-order and critical-thinking skills.
- All lessons had clearly identifiable learning intentions. To explicitly develop students' awareness of these intentions, teachers should work towards communicating them throughout the lessons and as part of a focused summation at the end of lessons. This would help students to assess their own progress while also giving teachers insight into areas that require further development.
- Assessment for learning was mainly achieved through teacher-led questioning. Global questioning was used to activate prior learning or to initiate discussion; and these were most effective when followed by directed questions. To further support students' participation in their learning, more frequent use of directed questioning is recommended.
- 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.
- There was very good evidence of differentiation, particularly when the teacher circulated during practical activities, to meet the learning needs of students.
- Clear instructions were given for activities throughout each lesson observed with appropriate attention being given to safety considerations during practical classes.
- There is continuous assessment of students' practical work in MTW and CS with oral feedback provided to students. As is good practice, the outcomes of these assessments are combined with formal test results.
- Effective use of information and communications technology enhanced student learning.
- Students' literacy development was well supported through the widespread focus on topic-specific terminology. This is in line with a whole-school approach to literacy which has been developed as part of the school self-evaluation process.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole school support for MTW and CS is good.
- Time provision for the subjects is appropriate with class periods well distributed across the week. All classes are of mixed ability and students sit certificate examinations at the level appropriate to their abilities and interests.
- All first-year students participate in a year-long MTW sampling module in order to assist them in making their subject choices on entering second year. MTW and CS are very popular subjects in the school.
- Continuing professional development is encouraged by management and there has been a variety of whole-school professional development inputs in areas such as literacy, numeracy and formative instructional practice.
- Formal assessment is well developed and follows school policy. These assessments take place at Christmas, in summer and following mock examinations. Continuous assessment takes account of progress in design project work and topic tests.
- The classroom available for the teaching and learning of the subjects is well equipped, neat and tidy. Tool storage is well organised and examples of students' project work are displayed.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The planning and preparation of all lessons observed was good. Suitable teaching and learning resources were prepared in advance and activities were planned to supplement instruction.
- Subject department planning is well progressed and follows the School Development Planning Initiative template. To further improve on the schemes of work within these plans, it is recommended that greater detail be provided on teaching resources, methodologies and assessment; and that these be more closely integrated with the student learning outcomes.
- The MTW and CS department regularly meets with a number of other practical subject departments. The minutes of these meetings should be recorded and forwarded to management. Future subject planning meetings should include pedagogical discussion in the areas of teaching, learning and assessment.
- A sample of students' work was examined during the evaluation. In most instances, students' work was of a good quality and appropriate levels of subject material were covered. This work was monitored by the teacher.
- A safety audit of the MTW room is carried out by the subject department using a risks and hazards checklist. It is recommended that these documents be signed, dated and copied to management. A good range of standard warning signage is on display and this is supplemented by teacher-produced safety rules and instructions for each machine.
- Analyses of results in the certificate examinations are carried out annually and are recorded in the planning folder. A concise action plan should be developed to build on strengths and to address any weaknesses that may be identified from the analyses.

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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.