

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

**Saint Caimin's Community College
Shannon, County Clare
Roll number: 91447I**

Date of inspection: 03 November 2015



**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 CONSTRUCTION STUDIES
AND MATERIALS TECHNOLOGY (WOOD)

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	03 November 2015
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 five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Setting high standards for students, both in the practical and theory elements of their work, was a feature in the lessons observed.
- Effective questioning techniques were applied to ensure that student answering gave direction to lesson development.
- Teacher and peer demonstration were used effectively to impart key woodworking skills and processes.
- Where group work was used, it empowered students to explore and develop the particular topic being investigated.
- The atmosphere in lessons was positive and conducive to learning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- While oral feedback to students was a significant strength in the lessons observed, there is scope to extend the current written feedback process to include formative written feedback in students' copybooks in line with *assessment for learning* (AFL) best practice.
- School management and the subject department should work towards including aspects of Construction Studies (CS) within the Transition Year (TY) programme.
- Further development of subject plans for Materials Technology (Wood) (MTW) and CS should provide clear links between specific programme content and expected learning outcomes, teaching methods and student assessment.

INTRODUCTION

Saint Caimin's Community School is a co-educational school operating under the trusteeship of the Bishop of Killaloe, the Sisters of Mercy and the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (ETB). The school provides a broad range of programmes including an optional TY. Enrolment currently stands at 709 students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching observed ranged from good to very good. Effective practices such as peer demonstration of practical woodwork skills and group discussions featured in very good lessons. The purpose of each lesson was made clear at the outset and revisited at the end of the lesson to reinforce the learning.
- There was evidence of effective learning. Students' answering of teachers' questions displayed growing knowledge and understanding.
- Communication among students and between teachers and students was appropriately respectful and pleasant.
- Attention to detail and high standards were expected of students at all times. This was particularly evident with regard to draughtsmanship in the technical drawing details, in the practical and finishing skills and in homework setting.
- Teacher and peer demonstrations were used very effectively to impart key woodworking skills and processes. This aspect of teaching the subjects may be further enhanced by introducing peer demonstration and collaboration into theory lessons.
- Where group work was used, it empowered students to explore and develop the particular topic being investigated. This very good practice should be applied more widely.
- Well-established routines for everyday tasks, such as distribution of tools and materials and the organisation of group work, supported effective classroom management. The well-ordered learning environment facilitated easy interaction between students and teachers and supported an atmosphere that was conducive to learning.
- Very good use of information and communication technology (ICT) for teaching was observed in one lesson. In this instance, the technical detail of a house foundation had been modelled in *SolidWorks* and was used to clarify and enhance the students' understanding of the construction method. The use of ICT should be expanded and further developed to include the use of a range of resources, including resources from the internet.
- Worksheets were used commendably in a number of lessons to aid students' understanding of the key terms, skills and applications. The worksheets also provided an opportunity to integrate numeracy and literacy into the lessons.
- Assessment was an integral part of the teaching observed, with strategies ranging from teacher-led questioning to student-based reflection and sharing. Questioning was generally well structured and differentiated to provide a meaningful indication of students' learning.

- Oral feedback to students was a significant strength of the observed teaching. Further opportunities for expanding the use of AfL should be explored, such as increasing the annotation of students' homework and theory elements of the lessons.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Incoming first-year students get the opportunity to sample each of the optional subjects on a rotational basis before making their final choice in early November. The subject-choice process is fair and equitable. Students are given an initial open choice from the full list of optional subjects and the subject option groups are devised on the basis of their preferences.
- The subjects are allocated sufficient time for the completion of syllabus requirements. A combination of single-period and double-period lessons facilitates completion of students' project design work and provides regular contact with the subjects.
- School management and the subject department should work towards including aspects of CS within the TY programme. This would provide access for students who may not have studied MTW in junior cycle. A written programme for TY in this subject already exists. However, this plan contains too much Leaving Certificate material. A different approach within the spirit of TY is required, involving alternative content to a greater extent and a greater focus on cross-curricular links such as existing links with the school musical.
- There was a very good focus on health and safety. Students were reminded of the need for vigilance and good safety practice in both practical and theory lessons. Good practice was also evident in the regularity of health and safety reviews and the implementation of Health and Safety Authority guidelines at subject and whole-school level.
- The two woodwork rooms used for teaching MTW and CS are well equipped and maintained. The teachers of the subjects take individual responsibility for ensuring the maintenance of the rooms in which each is predominantly based. This is a satisfactory arrangement.
- Good practice is followed with regard to the encouragement and support of teachers' continuing professional development (CPD). CPD inputs on active learning methodologies and numeracy were seen to influence thinking and practice in the subject area.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The subject plans for MTW and CS are well developed and contain records of subject meetings. Further development of these plans should describe clear links between specific programme content and learning outcomes. This will help to develop students' skills and knowledge and enable assessment practices that evaluate and facilitate learning. This information is best presented concisely, for example in tabular form.
- A very good level of individual planning for lessons was observed and this included the preparation and provision of materials for students' use.

- Certificate examination results are analysed by each subject department and this informs future planning. This exemplary practice should be integrated further into the subject plans and form part of the annual review process.
- Regular subject planning meetings take place with an agenda being provided frequently by management. To further develop the effectiveness of this planning time, a greater focus on teaching and learning, as opposed to operational tasks, should be considered.
- The role of subject co-ordinator rotates between subject teachers, in keeping with best practice.
- Practices with regard to record keeping and reporting are good. Students' attendance and achievements are recorded and parents are informed of these at parent-teacher meetings, in formal school reports and through the student journal.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy 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

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management and Staff of St. Caimin's Community School welcome the positive nature of this report. It reflects the professionalism and dynamics of the school's Materials Technology and Construction department. It acknowledges that teaching and learning is of a high standard and that attention to detail and high standards were observed in teachers' planning and expected from students in their work.

The report notes the quality of the facilities and the atmosphere in the classroom; both of which enhance the learning experience for students.

Teachers' engagement in relevant CPD was evident in their teaching.

Area 2 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.

- Feedback: Greater emphasis will be placed on recording written feedback on students' work to complement the oral feedback given.
- School management will endeavour to include aspects of CS in the transition year programme every year; both within and outside timetabled classes and refer to same in the subject plan.
- Further development of subject plans: while the subject plan is adjusted on a regular basis to reflect the ongoing work of the department, greater attention will be given to the links between specific programme content and expected learning outcomes, teaching methods and student assessment.