

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Coláiste an Eachréidh**  
**Athenry, County Galway**  
**Roll number: 76102K**

**Date of inspection: 17 April 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**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	17 April 2012
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with the principal and the subject-teacher</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during 6 class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to the principal and the subject-teacher</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

1. A high standard of teaching and learning was observed in all the lessons and occasionally an exceptionally high standard, in some aspects of the work.
2. The provision of resources for the subjects is good, including equipment, tools and both hardware and software for information technology.
3. There are good practices in operation to ease the use of the facilities provided, including the transfer of students between the two separate parts of the school.
4. The progress made on providing programmes of work for every group of students is commended.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

5. It is recommended that active teaching methods be further developed, to achieve the highest possible standard in this aspect of teaching and learning.
  6. Co-operative planning with teachers of other subjects should be further developed.
  7. As an extra development of the subject-plan, it is recommended that it specify the teaching methodologies, resources, expected learning outcomes and assessment methods to be used to present the respective segments of learning listed in the programmes of work.
-

## **INTRODUCTION**

Coláiste an Eachréidh is an Irish-medium postprimary school under the auspices of County Galway Vocational Education Committee. It is a co-educational, multi-denominational school, with 105 students enrolled at the time of the evaluation. From its central location in Athenry, the school serves an extensive catchment area in east Galway. Every student does the Transition Year programme, as part of which a Construction Studies module is offered. The school operates in two separate buildings at present and the students walk from the main building to the Woodwork room for classes in Materials Technology (Wood) (MTW) and in Construction Studies (CS).

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- In general, the standard of teaching observed was high. Certain aspects of the teaching were excellent, particularly the very effective differentiation in a woodwork drawing class where the visualiser was really well used.
- Good use was made of peer-demonstration to illustrate marking-out and wood processing skills. The students were absorbed in the work and were active during classes. To achieve the highest possible standard in active learning, it is recommended that more use be made of group-work, to develop more independent-learning opportunities for the students.
- Management in the classrooms was very good. Set routines helped the organisation of classes, for example they facilitated the movement of students to and from the woodwork room, which is on a separate site from the main school-building; routines also facilitated the distribution and collection of students' work and of equipment. This aspect of management helped to promote a good learning environment.
- Good use was made of the layout of the drawing room, in particular, to facilitate student learning. In this room, the desks were arranged in a half-square with a line of four desks inside. This layout worked well, in having all the students close to the screens and to the whiteboard, and in facilitating the organisation of the students in groups. Student activities at their own benches in the woodwork room were well organised.
- Interpersonal relationships, between teacher and students and among the students themselves, were polite and positive. These relationships helped to create a good environment, conducive to student learning.
- Assessment was appropriately integrated into teaching and learning. The teacher kept a close eye on student progress during lessons. Homework, copybooks and practical work are regularly assessed. Monthly progress reports are provided, and the results of continuous assessment are taken into account when school-reports on Christmas- and summer-tests are being completed.
- Irish was the language of instruction and communication in all the lessons observed. Specific terminology was integrated smoothly into students' vocabulary and they had made significant progress in using the specific language of the subjects. To build on the standard of literacy already achieved by the students, strategies should be developed to promote their written literacy. The display of specific language and terminology in the learning environment should be augmented as part of this strategic development.

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

- There is a fair and effective system in operation regarding students' choice of MTW as a subject for study in junior cycle. The students make an initial subject-choice before starting classes in the school. Then all students are given a flavour of every subject at the beginning of first year. At the autumn mid-term break, the students make a choice, with guidance and advice from the teaching staff, taking account of their own experience of the subjects.
- In senior cycle, students are offered an open choice of subjects and choice bands are generated, based on student choices as far as possible. Students' experience in Transition Year enhances the support available to them in making subject choices for the Leaving Certificate course. Good practice is followed regarding gender balance in subject selection and, as a result, the proportion of girls studying these subjects is increasing.
- The timetable supports good teaching of the subjects. The allocation of time is sufficient to cover the respective syllabuses. Double class-periods are provided for every class-group, an arrangement which facilitates the completion of their practical work.
- An assessment system for the whole school is well developed and provided in printed form for the school community. The subject department observes the assessment policy of the school. At a year-end ceremony, prizes are awarded for the best design project for Junior Certificate and for Leaving Certificate. This recognition helps student learning as part of the positive assessment system which has been developed in the school.
- The school supports the teaching of the subjects by providing equipment, tools, wood, other materials and teaching resources, at the request of the subject-department. Good management facilitates the correct use of facilities, including management of the transfer from one school-building to the other. The use of information and communication technology for the subjects has been well developed.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The amount of work done on developing work-programmes for every class-group is commended. As the next step in the development of the MTW subject-plan, it is recommended that the following would be specified for the segments of learning listed in the programmes of work: the learning outcomes expected, the teaching methodologies to be used, the teaching resources to be used, and the assessment methods to be employed. It is considered that a tabular layout would best suit the recording of this data in the subject-plan.
- To take full advantage of co-operative planning for the subject-department, the amount of such planning undertaken with teachers of other subjects should be further developed. Co-operative planning is really helpful, especially when teachers share methodologies and strategies that they themselves have found effective. In subjects with common elements, for example practical project-work, student design-work and creative work, there are many advantages to be derived from co-operative planning. The development of literacy skills is a common aspect of every subject. It would be worthwhile for the teachers taking part in this co-operative planning to rotate the role of co-ordinator among them.

- A high standard of individual planning was observed in all classes. The planning was quite specific, with all materials and equipment readily available to the students. The lessons were well structured. To improve standards even further, it would be worth sharing with the students, at the outset of each lesson, the learning outcomes expected of that lesson, and then reviewing those outcomes at lesson's end.
- The recording and reporting systems are working well in the subject-department. An appropriate record is kept of work done and of student progress. The students get regular feedback on their results from their teacher. Feedback is made available to the parents through school-reports and at parent-teacher meetings. There is an appropriate emphasis on the use of school-diaries as a means of promoting communication between teachers and parents.

---

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the subject teacher 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 school is satisfied with the report.

**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 recommendations of the report have been shared with the school community. The same recommendations are central to the school's planning scheme and are prominent in the process of school self-evaluation.

*The above is a translation of the school response submitted by the board of management*