An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Materials Technology (Wood) & Construction Studies

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Coláiste Mhuirlinne
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Doughiska Road Galway
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	76096S

Date of Inspection: 10-10-2016

Date of issue of report: 10-02-2017

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

WHAT IS A SUBJECT INSPECTION?

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Materials Technology (Wood) & Construction Studies under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	10-10-2016
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students	• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Coláiste Mhuirlinne is a co-educational post-primary school under the trusteeship of Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board. The school's enrolment is 367 students. The school has been established for the last four years and it currently provides the Junior Certificate programme, the compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching was very good.
- The quality of student learning was very good.
- Very good use was made of a number of strategies associated with the principles of assessment for learning (AfL).
- Materials Technology (Wood) (MTW) and Construction Studies (CS) provision is very well supported by school management.
- Support in MTW and CS for students with special educational needs or in need of learning support is provided through team teaching and co-operative in-class support.
- Planning and preparation for MTW and CS is of very high quality; the department recognises that further development of the yearly schemes still needs to be progressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- While a range of very effective teaching methods was used, it is recommended that teachers provide greater opportunities for students to note the theory aspects of the syllabus in their copybooks during MTW and CS lessons.
- Possibilities for improvement exist within the schemes of work; the subject department has identified the need to produce consistently formatted schemes and this best practice approach is recommended.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching of very high quality, that engaged students actively, was observed in all lessons. In the LCA lesson two teachers worked as a team and this deployment of teacher resources was very effective in achieving high quality learning among students.
- There is a highly commendable whole-school initiative in place that provides the opportunity to link with students' prior learning at the beginning of each lesson.
- All teachers shared the learning intentions with students at the outset and used them to give structure to lessons. To further develop the quality of assessment, learning intentions should be used at the end of each lesson to check the progress of all students.
- Differentiation was facilitated through questioning by teachers and differentiated class work. This approach to meeting students' needs within mixed-ability classes is commended.
- Student learning of high quality was observed. Teachers modelled enthusiasm and enjoyment of the subject, and thereby created a learning environment where students were self-motivated to engage in, extend and enjoy their learning. Affirmation of students' effort was a key feature of all lessons. Students displayed positive attitudes towards MTW and CS.
- Very good use was made of a number of strategies associated with the principles of AfL such as brainstorming, think-pair-share, group work and peer learning. In particular, the practice of TY students who had studied MTW in junior cycle peer teaching certain skills and processes, is highly commendable.
- While a range of very effective teaching methods was used, it is recommended that teachers provide greater opportunities for students to note the theory aspects of the syllabus in their copybooks during MTW and CS lessons. This will aid revision and support the development of the students' note-making, as opposed to note-taking skills.
- Development of students' numeracy and literacy skills was integral to teaching, particularly in the learning of terminology related to tools and processes. Teachers have responded to student needs, through the school self-evaluation process, by nominating one student per lesson to identify links with numeracy. This approach to improving numerical literacy among students is highly praised.
- Assessment was a central 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.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Management is very supportive of the subjects and the department is well resourced.
- A subject co-ordinator is in place and regular subject planning meetings are facilitated. As this is a single teacher department, it would be advantageous to organise department meetings with other practical departments to facilitate meaningful discussion in the area of teaching and learning.

- The subjects are allocated sufficient time to meet 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.
- There is continuous assessment of students' practical work with oral feedback provided. As is good practice the outcomes of these assessments are combined with formal test results at Christmas and summer.
- Support in MTW and CS for students with special educational needs or in need of learning support is provided through team teaching and co-operative in-class support.
- Good practice is followed with regard to the encouragement and support of teachers' continuing professional development (CPD). Evidence was gathered that whole-school CPD inputs on AfL, mindfulness and restorative practice have impacted on thinking and practice in the subject area.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning for MTW and CS is of a very high quality. It is reflective and evaluative and is clearly informing the very good classroom practices.
- Possibilities for improvement exist with the schemes of work. The subject department has identified the need to produce consistently formatted schemes of work and this approach reflects best practice.
- 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.
- A exemplary department improvement plan is in place which identifies targets to enhance MTW and CS provision in the school. Utilising the six-step school self-evaluation process will enable the department to refine and implement the improvement plan, to measure progress, and to evaluate impacts on learning and teaching.
- Record keeping is effective and is both written in teachers' diaries and kept electronically. Communication with parents is supported through regular school reports, parent-teacher meetings and the students' journals.

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

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	***Very good*** applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is ***outstanding*** and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	***Good*** applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a *very good* standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	***Satisfactory*** applies where the quality of provision is adequate. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	***Fair*** applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	***Weak*** applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;

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