An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Wood Technology and Construction Studies
Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Saint Cuan's College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Castleblakeney Ballinasloe Co Galway
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	62930V
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	29-11-2022
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	20/02/2023

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 Wood Technology and 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.

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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Child Protection</td><td>Anti-bullying</td></tr>
<tr><td>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</td><td>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013) and this policy is reviewed annually.
2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the Procedures) since the previous report to the board.
3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and students.</td></tr>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Subject inspection

Dates of inspection	28-11-22 and 29-11-2022
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students, including focus groups	• Observation of teaching and learning during three lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to deputy principal and relevant staff

School context

Saint Cuan's College is a co-educational, post-primary school located in Castleblakeney, County Galway and has an enrolment of 387 students. It operates under the trusteeship of the Catholic Bishop of Elphin. The programmes offered in the school include the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of teaching was very good overall; classroom management and atmosphere in lessons were characterised by excellent teacher support and affirmation of students' efforts.
- Students were purposefully engaged during all lesson activities, resulting in high-quality learning; during practical lessons, students recorded some aspects of their learning journey.
- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good and there is a very high uptake of both Wood Technology and Construction Studies.
- The Wood Technology classroom is well equipped and students have access to a range of machines and computer numerical control (CNC) technology.
- The quality of lesson preparation was very good and good progress has been made in relation to senior cycle planning; junior cycle planning is based on content and projects rather than focusing on skills' development.

Recommendations

- Strategies to provide students with the opportunity to record their learning journey through the units of learning should be developed. This will provide a mechanism to encourage students to engage further with feedback, to reflect on the learning intentions, to engage effectively with the design process and to note the oral feedback provided to them by teachers.
- A number of health and safety actions are required: the sanders and bandsaw in the classroom should be connected to a localised extraction system; safe operating areas should be marked around all machines; and a kickstop should be added to the bandsaw in the classroom.
- A 'Units of Learning' approach to planning for Wood Technology should be developed to provide detail about learning outcomes, resources, teaching methodologies and modes of assessment.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The quality of teaching and of learning was very good overall.
- Classroom management and atmosphere in lessons were characterised by excellent teacher support and affirmation of students' efforts. Well-established routines for everyday tasks, such as the distribution of tools and materials, supported effective classroom management.
- Good links were made by the teacher to the content taught in previous lessons. As an additional way to assess student's understanding, the students should be invited to provide the recap and to share their learning, as opposed to the teacher presenting what was taught.
- The intended learning was shared at the outset of each lesson. These learning intentions were mostly content-based. Such intentions should be expanded to reflect the key learning concepts and skills being taught in lessons and to link them to success criteria. This would help students assess their own progress while also providing teachers with an insight into areas that require further development.
- Very good oral developmental feedback was provided to students in all lessons. Strategies, such as asking the student to note the oral feedback, should be developed to encourage students to engage further with feedback.
- Students were purposefully engaged during all lesson activities, resulting in high quality learning. There was an excellent focus on developing students' technical skills such as vertical sawing and marking out. High expectations of the students were also evident and students were encouraged to use difficult processes and complex wood joints in their projects, as appropriate.
- Teacher-led demonstrations were used in all lessons. In some lessons, these demonstrations did not involve student participation. Opportunities should be created to involve students to a greater extent in all demonstrations by asking probing questions, initiating discussion and using peer demonstration, especially when revising material covered in previous lessons.
- The theory and practical elements of the Wood Technology specification are taught in an integrated manner through the concurrent teaching of these elements. In the practical lessons observed, theoretical elements were referenced but students did not take any notes or make sketches, and opportunities were missed to reinforce student learning. Homework should also be used to a greater extent to support this integrated approach.
- There was a good focus on the development of numeracy and literacy skills throughout each lesson, but not all students engaged effectively in the tasks. Time should be allowed for students to engage at a deeper level and to record their learning. For example, in one lesson, students were asked to work out some measurement calculations in their head, and, while a small number of the students were successful, many others did not benefit from the activity. An alternative approach, where students work in pairs on a worksheet, would provide more opportunities for all students to engage in the learning and to develop their problem-solving skills.
- Students' engagement in learning tasks was high and was maintained during the course of all lessons. The assigning of differentiated tasks and individual projects ensured that students maintained focus and were challenged according to their abilities.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good. School management is supportive of the subjects and adequate time is provided across junior and senior cycle for the subjects.
- The Wood Technology classroom is well equipped, and provides a print-rich environment, with various relevant materials and projects prominently displayed to stimulate student interest in the subjects.
- There are some areas relating to health and safety that need to be addressed. An extraction system is required on the sanders and the bandsaw in the classroom; safe operating areas need to be marked around all machines such as the small sander and scroll saws; and a kick stop needs to be added to the bandsaw in the classroom.
- Access to Wood Technology is very good. All first-year students take part in a year-long subject sampling programme. This approach helps to ensure that students make their optional subject choices based upon their experience, aptitude for, and interest in the subjects that they are sampling. This system has resulted in very good uptake of Wood Technology and the students involved in the focus group meeting were complimentary of the sampling programme.
- Good practice is followed with regard to the encouragement and support of teachers' professional learning.

3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of lesson preparation was very good. All lessons were well structured and paced, and there was appropriate balance between teacher instruction and student activity.
- Good progress has been made in relation to planning for senior cycle Construction Studies and a whole school approach to subject planning has recently been implemented which is a positive development.
- Planning for junior cycle is under developed. A 'Units of Learning' approach to planning for Wood Technology should be developed to provide detail about learning outcomes, resources, teaching methodologies and modes of assessment.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the deputy principal and subject teacher at the conclusion of the evaluation.

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 of 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. 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;