

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

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

**Mulroy College  
Milford, Co. Donegal  
Roll number: 712200**

**Date of inspection: 9 May 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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	9 May 2012
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The teaching and learning observed was very good.
- Lessons were well planned and a wide range of resources and teaching aids was used.
- The careful differentiation of material ensured that all students were included in the learning process.
- Very good teacher-student rapport combined with effective classroom management techniques, creating a positive classroom atmosphere.
- The subject department is well resourced through the provision of time, rooms, materials and equipment.
- Subject department planning is progressing well.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- There should be an increase in the quantity and quality of constructive and affirmative written feedback provided to students on their work.
  - Homework should be assigned more regularly to all year groups.
  - The schemes of work should be further developed to provide greater details on teaching resources, methodologies and assessment. These should be linked with the proposed student learning outcomes for each topic.
  - The procedures followed when integrating continuous assessment marks with end-of-term examinations need to be documented in the subject plan and communicated to students.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Mulroy College participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan. It currently caters for 309 students: 158 males and 151 females. Materials Technology Wood (MTW) is offered in the Junior Certificate programme and the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP). Construction Studies (CS) is offered in both the Leaving Certificate programme and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). Graphics and Construction Studies is offered in the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. The optional Transition Year (TY) does not currently contain a CS module.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The proposed learning outcomes for lessons were shared orally with the students. These learning outcomes should be displayed using the chalkboard or the data projector to assist in keeping the work of the lesson focused and to aid the lesson summary.
- Through question-and-answer sessions, good links were forged with previous learning.
- A combination of global and directed questions was used. Students participated well and were appropriately affirmed for their answers.
- Seating plans were in place and classroom management techniques were very effective. Lesson pace was good and learning activities were suitably varied.
- A very good teacher-student rapport contributed to a positive classroom atmosphere. Students demonstrated enthusiasm for the subjects during all lessons evaluated.
- Teachers used and emphasised the terminology associated with MTW and CS during lessons. Any new terminology encountered was written on a designated A2 sized whiteboard. This provides a strong support for literacy development and is commended. To further build on this good practice, students should record these words in their copybooks.
- Whole-class demonstration was the main teaching methodology used in the practical woodwork lessons observed. Further demonstrations to small groups and individuals provided additional support. Demonstrations were concise and well organised, with clear instructions given.
- Both the chalkboard and information and communication technology (ICT) were well used to present theoretical lessons and to support the development of knowledge and understanding.
- There were good levels of differentiation evident with all students included in the learning process. Appropriate principles and skills were introduced incrementally. The teacher circulated among the students whilst they were working on tasks, monitoring progress and providing additional support when required.
- During a CS lesson observed, a model was used to explain the use of a water test on below-ground drainage. Pipe fittings were also distributed amongst the students to familiarise them with the equipment involved. The use of such resources is commended as it effectively links theoretical learning with the practical applications of the subject.
- Teachers modelled best health and safety practices and ensured that students did likewise through the close monitoring of activities. The main safety points were consistently repeated to reinforce learning and ensure compliance.

- From the observation of students' journals and copybooks it is evident that there are variations in the amount and frequency of homework being allocated. Consistent with the subject departments planning documentation it is recommended that a concerted effort be made to assign homework regularly.
- It is recommended that there be an increase in the written developmental feedback provided to students on their work, in keeping with assessment for learning (AFL) principles.
- Good levels of work were evident in students' CS portfolios. This work is signed and dated regularly by teachers.
- There is continuous assessment of students' practical work in MTW and CS with oral feedback provided. As is good practice, the outcomes of these assessments are combined with formal test results at Christmas and summer.

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

- At times of transition, students are offered an open choice of optional subjects with option bands generated to best suit students' choices. The provision of open days, information evenings, advice from subject departments and career guidance helps to ensure that students make informed subject choices.
- Time allocation for the subjects is good. A combination of double and single class periods caters well for practical work, project work, drawing and theory.
- MTW and CS classes are of mixed ability with access to higher and ordinary level accommodated within class groups.
- Teachers have availed of subject-specific training provided by the Technology Subjects Support Service (t4). In addition to this, management provides a programme of whole-school in-service. This in-career development of the teaching team is commended.
- The subject department is well resourced and has two rooms available for the teaching of the subjects. Both are clean, bright and well organised with good displays of students' project work.
- Following best practice, the subject department carries out an annual safety audit using a risks and hazards checklist. Safe operation areas are clearly marked around machines and personal protection equipment was available as required. Machine-specific, safe use rules were evident and a range of safety signage was on display.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A subject co-ordinator is in place and regular subject planning meetings are facilitated. It is recommended that minutes of these meetings be retained in the planning folders and copied to senior management.
- 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.

- When revising the MTW schemes of work, there should be a greater emphasis placed on the design process and the development of freehand sketching skills. Furthermore, it is suggested that the production of a project write-up closely following the State Examinations Commission guidelines should be incorporated into the second-year work programme. This would provide the students with valuable experience for their Junior Certificate assessment.
- The scheme of work for the CS module in TY focuses on practical skills. To provide the students with a more realistic experience of the subject the module should be broadened to include theoretical work and some drawing of building details.
- Clear criteria and procedures need to be documented around the integration of continuous assessment marks with end-of-term examinations.

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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, 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 Mulroy College is very pleased with the content of the report. In particular we welcome the main findings which place a positive emphasis on the quality of teaching and learning.

Although it was an extremely busy time of year for the Wood Technology Department, the professionalism and courtesy of the visiting inspector and the collaborative and positive manner in which the inspection was carried out is to be commended.

The verbal report given by the inspector to senior management and the two teachers concerned at the end of the inspection was excellent. His comments and advice were not only relevant to the Department concerned but also as a whole school approach to teaching and learning methodologies.

The Board will continue to support and promote the teaching and learning of Wood Technology and Construction Studies in the college and will assist the subject department in the implementation of the main recommendations.

### **Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

Homework has been assigned more regularly and schemes of work have been developed further to provide greater details on teaching resources, methodologies and assessment.