An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Visual Arts

REPORT

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<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>High St Mixed N S</th>
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<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
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<td>Belmont,</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
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Date of inspection: 16-01-2018
WHAT IS A CURRICULUM EVALUATION?
Curriculum Evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the Primary School Curriculum (1999). 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 Visual Arts under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils’ learning
2. Supporting pupils’ learning through learner experiences and teachers’ practice
3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils’ learning

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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.
Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection 16-01-2018

Inspection activities undertaken

- Discussion with principal and teachers
- Review of relevant documents
- Pupil focus-group interview
- Observation of teaching and learning
- Examination of pupils’ work
- Interaction with pupils
- Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

High Street N.S. is a co-educational, vertical primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois. The school has three mainstream class teachers and one special education teacher. There are seventy-one pupils enrolled in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of the pupils’ learning in Visual Arts is very good. Pupils are motivated to learn through challenging learning activities and attainable outcomes.
- The quality of teaching in Visual Arts is of a very high standard, with guided discussion, skilful questioning and logical integration with other subject areas.
- The quality of assessment is good; however, there is scope to further develop this aspect of provision.
- The overall quality of whole-school planning is satisfactory. There is scope to improve aspects of the whole-school plan in order to better ensure progression and continuity from junior infants to sixth class.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Whole-school approaches to assessment in Visual Arts should be established to include assessment for learning (AFL), assessment of learning (AoL) approaches, self-assessment and peer-assessment.
- It is recommended that the whole-school plan for Visual Arts include details of the specific topics, concepts and skills to be taught for each strand and identify the explicit language to be taught at each class level with a view to providing for optimum continuity and progression.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING

The quality of the pupils’ learning in Visual Arts is very good. A focus-group interview with pupils confirms that they have a very positive attitude towards Visual Arts. High levels of engagement and motivation were evident during learning activities observed. Responding during the focus-group interview, pupils showed great interest in the subject and satisfaction with their own learning achievements.

The pupils demonstrated very good attainment of the lesson objectives. They display confidence and competence in experimenting imaginatively with art materials, including chalks, fabric materials and clay. Pupils capably describe their learning using terminology and language from the curriculum. In order to ensure progression, continuity and the incremental development of Visual Arts’ terminology from class to class, there is scope to identify explicit language to be taught at each class level. Pupils’ learning is strongly supported from a variety of starting points that enable them to express their understanding of the world from their experiences, observation and curiosity.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE

The quality of pupils’ learning experiences is very good. All pupils have access to a wide range of Visual Arts’ resources and they are enabled to explore and experiment with different materials, tools and media. The pupils are provided with sequenced learning tasks to support them in achieving the intended learning outcomes. Talk and discussion is well facilitated to encourage pupils to express their artistic ideas. Teachers planned very well for pupil questioning using techniques such as the artist’s chair. During the evaluation, there was evidence of respectful interactions by teachers with their pupils and between the pupils themselves.

Lessons were structured very effectively and the pupils were active in the learning process. While learning activities were challenging and pupils were enabled to make art individually, there is scope to promote more opportunities for pupils to make art in pairs and collaboratively. Teachers use a variety of stimuli including information and communications technology (ICT). Further opportunities for pupils to use ICT to explore art, carry out research and present art projects should be provided. Appropriate theme-based integrated activities and linkage with other areas of the curriculum are particularly effective.

The quality of teaching in Visual Arts is very good. Teachers referenced pupils’ prior learning experiences, emphasised discrete Visual Arts’ terminology and ensured that structured talk and discussion was central in lessons observed. Teachers’ enthusiasm for the subject is transmitted to the pupils and they demonstrate competence and proficiency in their skills and knowledge of the visual arts curriculum. Teachers prepare purposefully for lessons and interesting activities are well-planned and well-prepared. In order for pupils to have further opportunities to engage in learning activities outside the classroom, they should be afforded opportunities to receive first-hand experiences of art through visits to art galleries, museums and craft centres. The attractiveness of the visual arts’ environment evident each classroom should be extended to the communal areas of
the whole-school environment where the work of the pupils could be further affirmed and celebrated.

The quality of assessment is good overall. Teacher observation, pupil discussion and the maintenance of portfolios are the main approaches used. To further guide and support teachers in the monitoring of continuity and progression in pupils’ work in all strands of the curriculum, whole-school approaches to assessment should be collaboratively agreed and implemented. These approaches should then be documented in the whole-school plan for Visual Arts.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING

The quality of whole-school planning in Visual Arts is satisfactory. While general guidance is provided on the strands to be taught, the plan needs to provide more specific guidance on the incremental development of the specific strands, concepts and skills to be covered at each class level. An explicit glossary of Visual Arts’ terminology and vocabulary to be taught at each class level should also be agreed and included in the whole-school plan. Collaborative whole-school planning would help to ensure continuity in learning, support the tracking of progress and inform the content taught in all classes across the school.

The school reported that it is not currently engaging in the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process due to industrial action.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school’s child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.
### 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.

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td><strong>Very Good</strong></td>
<td><strong>Very good</strong> 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.</td>
<td>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</td>
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<td><strong>Good</strong></td>
<td><strong>Good</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong></td>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<td><strong>Fair</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fair</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<td><strong>Weak</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weak</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
**Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The School will develop a whole school approach to Assessment in Visual Arts and develop our whole school plan to include specific topics and identify the explicit language to be taught at each class level.

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

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