An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
Visual Arts

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>St Joseph’s NS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Rehins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ballina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co Mayo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>18561Q</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date of Evaluation: 23-06-2017
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 learning 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 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.
INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>23-06-2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>Examination of pupils’ work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>Interaction with pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil focus-group interview</td>
<td>Feedback to principal and teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum working-group interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SCHOOL CONTEXT
St Joseph’s NS, on the outskirts of Ballina town, is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killala. The school has undergone a period of transition in recent years with a growth in enrolment, structural development and the addition of two classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). There are 227 pupils on roll currently. Staff at the school comprises an administrative principal, eight class teachers, four special education teachers, two ASD unit teachers and two teachers not based in the school. Six special needs assistants (SNAs) support pupils as required.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The overall quality of pupils’ learning in Visual Arts is very good with some excellent standards being achieved by most pupils; further engagement with artists and sculptors would enrich the current provision.
- The teaching of Visual Arts is of a very high standard overall in the school.
- Significant strengths are noted in the variety of quality assessment practices that are implemented very effectively.
- Literacy and numeracy and all other curricular areas are very successfully integrated in the implementation of the programme across the school.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) is incorporated very well in the provision of Visual Arts.
- A curriculum working group promotes best practice effectively in the provision of the visual arts programme in the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS
No main recommendations were made during this evaluation.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The overall quality of pupils’ learning in Visual Arts is very good. Pupils engage with and benefit from the full breadth and balance of the curriculum. They enjoy their learning experiences. They display eagerness and motivation in their attitude to Visual Arts. A variety of starting points and stimuli are
used in all classes to enable the pupils to express their understanding of the world in a personal way, from their experiences and imagination, and from observation and curiosity. Pupils are active in the development of their knowledge and understanding of skills and concepts as they progress from class to class.

There is a strong whole-school focus on cross-curricular and integrated approaches and projects. Pupils discuss aspects of their work capably and they are particularly confident during the looking and responding strand of the curriculum. The pupils confirmed their very positive attitude to Visual Arts during the focus-group interview. Pupils’ interest in Visual Arts could be further stimulated by visits to local artists and craftspeople at work and by further visits to galleries and exhibitions.

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

Overall, the quality of pupil engagement with Visual Arts is very good. They are very well supported in the development of their natural abilities and potential and they are enabled to acquire skills and techniques through structured tasks and active learning approaches. The classroom and school environment promotes and celebrates pupil efforts in Visual Arts through well-ordered displays. In the focus-group discussion, the pupils identified fun, freedom, learning logs, stimuli, other artists, opportunities to explore, express and experiment, teamwork and learning from one another, as being very beneficial to their learning.

Oral language and other curricular areas are integrated and linked very successfully with Visual Arts. Pupils are encouraged to explore and experiment in imaginative and structured ways with a range of appropriate concrete materials and manipulatives that support their learning. Information and communications technology (ICT) is used effectively as a learning tool. Junior pupils have access to open-ended materials that promote creativity and facilitate their engagement through the theme of Exploring and Thinking in Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.

The teachers adopt a consultative and collaborative approach to the teaching of Visual Arts in the school. It is commendable that they build whole-staff capacity by sharing their expertise. They are ably supported by a curriculum working-group that helps to support the development and implementation of the school plan. All pupils have opportunity to show capabilities and independent achievement through appropriate activities that are relevant to ability and age. Very commendably, the pupils in the two recently established ASD classes are well integrated and respectfully supported. The teachers’ preparation references the curriculum statements and the teacher guidelines. Well-planned activities, curriculum glance cards, high expectations and skilful questioning guide pupils’ learning effectively. A commendable willingness exists among staff to explore innovative approaches for the benefit of pupils.

Assessment practices overall are very good. In many instances, best assessment for learning (AfL) evidence is used on an ongoing basis to identify the next steps needed to improve the pupils’ learning. Varying tasks and activities are set to meet pupil needs and differing abilities. Comprehensive work in self-assessment, peer-assessment and the use of portfolios are very consistent, praiseworthy approaches.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING
This school has engaged very successfully with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process. The overall quality of contextualised, specific whole-school planning and detailed individual planning for Visual Arts is very good. The whole-school plan for Visual Arts offers a broad, balanced, progressive and developmental programme together with equal access for all pupils to engage in purposeful activities that draw on their creative and aesthetic potential.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board is delighted with the findings of the Curriculum Evaluation of Art carried out in June 2017. The findings outline the very high quality teaching and learning experiences throughout the school. We feel it is a true reflection of the positive and valuable work that is taking place.

Part B  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The school will work with local artists and crafts people to further enhance the experience of the pupils and their engagement with the Visual Arts curriculum.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>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.</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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>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.</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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>