

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Art, Craft and Design

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Virginia College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Virginia Co Cavan
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	70390L

Date of Inspection: 06-11-2019



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

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 Art, Craft and Design 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.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

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.

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

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	05-11-2019 & 06-11-2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and art department

School context

Virginia College is a multi-denominational co-educational school with a current enrolment of 717 students. It operates under the trusteeship of the Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board (CMETB). The study of Art is optional in Junior Cycle and in the Leaving Certificate programme. Art is compulsory for students studying the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. The Transition Year (TY) is an optional programme and the study of Art is compulsory.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was very good.
- The overall quality of in-class assessment is good; higher-order questions were not consistently used in all lessons.
- Very good written formative feedback is provided on students' theory work though the feedback is not always used effectively by students.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support for Art is very good.
- Health and safety procedures are well established in art lessons; however, there is a lack of appropriate protection around the kiln and a recently completed health and safety audit report does not include the kiln or its specialist equipment.
- Overall, good quality progress is evident in the planning and preparation for Art; planning for differentiation in TY Art needs to be addressed.

Recommendations

- The use of higher-order questioning should be extended to foster students' deeper critical thinking about art work.
- The art department should develop strategies that engage students in using the formative feedback provided on key pieces of work.
- School management should plan, as resources permit, for the provision of appropriate protection in respect of the kiln; the kiln and its specialist equipment should be included in all health and safety documentation.
- The art department should ensure that the TY art plan includes differentiated learning intentions which support students whose experiences and abilities in Art vary.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was very good.
- The art department sets high expectations for student achievement; an affirming learning environment was apparent. In all lessons observed, very clear learning intentions and success criteria were shared with students to outline what learners should know and be able to understand and do by the end of the lesson.
- All lessons were well prepared, and there was good use of additional resources such as electronic presentations, visual aids and teacher-designed handouts. In many instances however, the handouts used were the same for all learners. Given the range of student abilities in art lessons, there is scope for greater differentiation when using teacher-designed resources to support and challenge all learners.
- There is a strong culture of reflective practice within the art department. The use of primary sources as starting points for students' project work was identified as an area to develop. In some of the practical lessons observed and in the sample of work reviewed, it was noted that the majority of students were using meaningful and interesting primary sources. The art department should now consider increasing students' understanding of the connection between using primary sources and developing ideas in an imaginative way.
- The overall quality of in-class assessment is good. The art department uses a range of effective assessment approaches including peer assessment and self assessment, graphic organisers to summarise key learning, and traffic-light exit slips.
- A range of questioning strategies was used in all of the lessons observed. Lower-order recall questions were dominantly used. In almost all instances the questions posed required very brief answers with the teacher then expanding on the answers. At times, there were opportunities to use more higher-order questioning to assess individual student's learning. It is recommended that the use of higher-order questioning be extended to foster students' deeper critical thinking about art work.
- In all lessons teachers planned for plenary sessions to assess students' achievement of the intended learning. However, some of the plenary sessions were not effective as they tended to be very brief. The department should ensure that in planning for plenary sessions sufficient time is given to ensure students can fully demonstrate their learning.
- Very good written formative feedback was noted on students' theory work. In some instances the feedback being provided was not being used effectively by most students. It is recommended that the art department looks at strategies to engage students in using feedback provided to them on key pieces of work.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support for Art is very good. Access to the subject is good, with option bands being created based on students' choice in both junior and senior cycle.
- There are two rooms designated for the teaching of Art. The display of work in both classrooms demonstrates the very good range of materials that students access during art lessons.

- The art department shows great dedication to the subject and supports many extra-curricular and co-curricular activities within the school. Activities include an art club and stage set-design.
- Health and safety procedures are well established for Art. The art department has developed a risk assessment, and safety signage is displayed in both rooms. The department has access to a kiln which has an extraction system. During the evaluation it was noted that there was no appropriate safety protection around the kiln. It is recommended that school management should now plan, as resources permit, to address this concern.
- Senior management recently had a health and safety audit completed by an external agency. The safety report produced from this audit did not make any reference to the kiln, its placement in the room or to its extraction system. It is recommended that the next health and safety audit address this.
- Senior management actively promotes a culture of continuous improvement in teaching and learning. A very good level of engagement with continuing professional development is evident amongst the teachers of Art.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Overall, good quality progress is evident in the planning and preparation for Art. A collaborative and collegial approach to subject planning is apparent.
- Very good lines of communication exist between the art department and senior management. Minutes of subject meetings are shared with senior management.
- A review of minutes indicates that many aspects relating to the co-ordination and organisation of the department are discussed; for instance attendance and planning for subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) meetings. To further promote a shared focus on classroom practice, teaching and learning should be included as a routine agenda item for all meetings.
- While good progress has been made in planning for Junior Cycle, there is some scope to develop units of learning further. There is no alignment between the planning for assessment and the desired learning to be achieved by students. This should be addressed by the art team.
- Visual culture and appreciation is planned for in all of the Junior Cycle units of learning. Notably at senior cycle, visual studies is integrated with practical work.
- The TY programme for Art reviewed has a strong emphasis on two-dimensional work. While this is valid in developing the requisite skills for those who have not studied Art before, there is scope to ensure that students who have previously studied art are facilitated to build on skills already acquired. It is recommended therefore that differentiated learning intentions which support the varying experiences and abilities of students in Art should be developed and included in the TY plan.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and art department 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 of 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 <i>very good</i> 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;