

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of ART
REPORT

Firhouse Community College
Firhouse Road, Dublin 24

Roll number: 70140L

Date of inspection: 4 February, 2016



AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN ART**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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| Dates of inspection | 3 and 4 February, 2016 |
| Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers |

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good and very good, with scope to further challenge students in a few lessons.
- Independent learning was a key feature observed, and lessons were predominantly student centred.
- Internet sourced imagery was the main inspiration for student project work, however there were very good examples of drawing from primary sources.
- Student behaviour was exemplary in all lessons and students displayed enthusiasm for the subject.
- Good planning practices are in place in the art department and these include long and short term individual and department plans.
- Very good opportunities for all students to access Art exist in the school, and co-curricular initiatives are a strong feature of the department.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The use of primary sources as a point of inspiration for students' work should be advocated for all programmes.
 - Methodologies for incorporating support studies more inherently into art lessons for junior cycle students should be developed.
 - Schemes of work should be further developed to include differentiated teaching methodologies and assessment strategies.
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INTRODUCTION

Firhouse Community College is a co-educational secondary school under the patronage of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board. The school has a current enrolment of 424 boys and 314 girls. Junior Certificate and the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) are available to students in junior cycle, and Transition Year (TY) is compulsory for all students. The established Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) are available for students in senior cycle.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good and very good, with scope to further challenge students in a few lessons.
- All lessons were very well prepared, with materials sourced in advance and learning intentions were shared with students. Teachers should ensure that students' understanding of these intentions is established at the outset.
- Student autonomy was a very positive feature in the majority of lessons. Students were observed to set up their workstations and to initiate learning without prompt from the teacher. They were frequently encouraged to experiment with media and to think for themselves as artists, which is very good practice.
- Very good references to prior learning was made in all lessons and learning was enhanced by references to students' own experience.
- Students in many lessons were encouraged to set their own challenges. This is good practice, however more guidance is required in some cases to ensure that the goals that the students set for themselves have a high level of challenge where appropriate.
- In lessons that were more teacher led the students were less inclined to experiment and expectations of students were lower. This should be addressed by differentiating learning intentions consistent with the varied abilities of the students within the group.
- A wide range of effective methodologies is used in the teaching and learning of Art History to senior cycle students. These include mind-maps, timelines, vocabulary sheets, questioning, discussion, games and interactive information and communications technology as well as reading and research.
- Methodologies for incorporating support studies more inherently into the learning of Art for junior cycle students should be developed, to build confidence, understanding and interest in Art History and Appreciation from first year.
- A variety of games is used to encourage the use of subject-specific language in written work. These methodologies should be further developed to provoke greater use of the oral language of the subject by encouraging students to use Art terminology when describing and discussing an artist's work, and indeed their own work in practical lessons.
- Effective questioning was used in the lessons observed to provoke discussion and to assess learning. These were well distributed among the group, however sufficient time should be given for students to think and respond.

- Some very good examples of drawing from primary sources were on display in both art rooms but there is an over-reliance on internet sourced imagery for student project work. This should be addressed by promoting the use of primary sources for all project work.
- In all lessons observed student behaviour was exemplary. Teachers were mobile throughout all lessons and an excellent rapport was noted in their interactions with students.
- Great care is taken in the display and presentation of student work. Student folders and copy books are very well maintained and demonstrate the pride they take in their work.
- Peer and self-assessment strategies are used frequently in the Art classes. A very good example of this was seen in a lesson where students had to answer questions on a dice about their own and their peers' work.
- Appropriate homework is assigned and monitored, and high quality formative feedback was seen for both practical and written work.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Art is an optional subject for all students and option bands are devised mainly on the basis of student preferences in first and fifth year.
- Uptake of Art is very good for junior cycle and in TY. The lower uptake for Leaving Certificate is an area for investigation by the art department and strategies should be devised to increase its appeal in senior cycle.
- The two specialist art rooms are print rich and are well resourced with facilities for a good range of Art and Craft disciplines, including high quality information and communications technology equipment. At present the kiln facilities are not fit for purpose and this should be addressed.
- The subject is well catered for in the timetable, which ensures that all art lessons take place in one of the shared specialist rooms.
- A wide range of co-curricular initiatives has been instigated by the art department. These include paintings, displays, murals and events which significantly enhance the school environment. Students take part and succeed in external art competitions, and in initiatives to facilitate continuing education in Art.
- Management should ensure that the art department is kept up to date with all relevant Department of Education and Skills circulars and continuing professional development.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A subject coordinator is in place and the art teachers have prepared plans individually and collaboratively for the department.
- There was evidence of good planning in the delivery of lessons observed, but there is scope for development of differentiated teaching methodologies and assessment strategies in the schemes of work.
- Management facilitates termly planning meetings for Art and minutes are recorded. The agenda for these meetings should be reviewed to include teaching and learning as an item for discussion.

- State Examination data is analysed by the department and this analysis should be used to inform future planning. The high uptake at higher level for certificate examinations demonstrates the art department's commitment to raising expectations of students. Strategies should now be explored to further improve attainment.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal/deputy principal/subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wishes to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

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

- 1 The first recommendation is to use primary sources as a point of inspiration for students work. This is a regular feature of the work of the Art Department that perhaps was not as evident as normal during the inspection, so we are confident that we will meet this recommendation in any future inspection.
- 2 We currently do incorporate support studies regularly in our Junior cycle lessons, but will attempt to do so more inherently.
- 3 In Firhouse Community College, we consistently strive to include differentiated teaching and assessment techniques into our lesson planning. A variety of techniques are evident in our practices and we will ensure that they are reflected in the lesson planning also.