

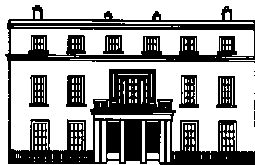
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Technical Graphics and Design
and Communication Graphics
REPORT**

**Bridgetown Vocational College
Bridgetown, County Wexford
Roll number: 71610E**

Date of inspection: 6 March 2014



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

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN TECHNICAL GRAPHICS AND
DESIGN AND COMMUNICATION GRAPHICS (DCG)

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	6 March 2014
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 six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning was effective and of a consistently good standard in all lessons, with some examples of very good practice observed.
- Teacher demonstrations were effective in all instances and there was a good balance between teacher input and student activity.
- Student uptake of higher level and their attainment at both junior and senior cycle is good.
- Graphics subjects are popular among students with a good proportion of boys and girls studying the subjects.
- Graphics subjects are well resourced, in particular, through the deployment of additional teachers on a team-teaching basis during the student assignment stage of senior cycle DCG.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- To further develop the subject department's good assessment procedures, a focus should be placed upon developing more structured opportunities for peer and self assessment, a formatively assessed student portfolio and collaboratively developed student target setting procedures.
- Future subject planning meetings should include pedagogical discussion in the areas of teaching, learning and assessment.

INTRODUCTION

Bridgetown Vocational College is a co-educational vocational school under the auspices of Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB). The school has a current enrolment of 597 students. The school offers a wide range of programmes including the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme and the established Leaving Certificate. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching and learning was effective and of a consistently good standard in all lessons, with some examples of very good practice observed.
- Explicit links with prior learning were developed and clear learning goals were shared with students. These good practices helped to focus students on the tasks at hand enabling them to build upon their previous learning.
- In almost all lessons there was a very good balance between teacher input and student activity. Students were actively engaged during teacher instructions and contributed during explanations and demonstrations on some occasions.
- The use of teaching aids and resources was effective and enhanced students' learning experiences. Data projection and blackboard drawing provided high levels of visual stimulus for students and blackboard sketching helped to promote a problem-solving approach on occasion. Online resources were incorporated into the students' learning experiences and they were regularly encouraged to access these resources as part of their independent learning activities. This is very good practice and should be further developed to promote greater student autonomy of learning.
- Teacher demonstrations were effective in all instances. On one occasion, students were given an appropriate amount of time to examine the various possible solutions and to question each others answers. This was a very beneficial learning activity as it promoted the development of students' investigation, problem-solving and communication skills.
- The questioning strategies employed during lessons were primarily lower-order and required recall type answers from students. To develop students' understanding, teachers should make a conscious effort to employ a more diverse range of questioning with a specific focus being placed on engaging students at a higher cognitive level.
- Students were very well behaved in the lessons observed. In all instances, students exhibited a high work ethic and made very good progress. Teachers affirmed students' efforts and provided very good individual feedback and advice during student activities.
- Students in the lessons observed paid particular attention to improving their draughting skills, neatness and accuracy. This appreciation for their work is commended and has been developed incrementally over time.
- Terminal assessment is a fundamental aspect of teaching and learning in graphics lessons. End-of-topic tests are incorporated into lessons regularly and results are tabulated and recorded by teachers. In some cases, these assessments form part of students' end-of-term examination results. This promotes continuous development and recognises students' work during the school term. The incorporation of examination marking schemes into

lessons is also used to develop students' self-evaluative skills. In doing so, students are required to reflect, analyse and evaluate their own learning.

- To build on these good practices, the subject department should pilot further assessment for learning (AfL) practices with an identified year group, possibly first year. This should include: structured opportunities for peer and self assessment, a formatively assessed student portfolio and collaboratively developed student target setting procedure.
- At junior cycle, most students choose the higher level examination in Technical Graphics. At senior cycle the majority of students choose higher level Design and Communication Graphics. Student achievement in these examinations is good and reflects the diverse range of abilities within the student cohort.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Graphics subjects are offered to students in all of the school's programmes. Uptake of graphics subjects is very good at junior cycle where there are a total of five class groups. The time allocated to graphics subjects is very good with four class periods per week at junior cycle, six class periods in fifth year and five class periods in sixth year.
- Students choose their optional subjects prior to entry, supported by information evenings and open days.. Option bands are formed based on students' preferences and vary from year to year. Currently, there is a working group researching the viability of Transition Year (TY) in the school. If its introduction is deemed appropriate for the school, TY would also help students choose their senior cycle optional subjects based upon their skills, aptitudes and preferences, while also enabling those who do not wish to continue studying DCG to experience a module in the subject area.
- The subject has access to two specialist graphics classrooms. Due to the large number of student studying graphics, some lessons are taught in Metalwork and Materials Technology (Wood) classrooms. Appropriate information and communication technology (ICT) resources are available in all classrooms thereby enabling teachers to utilise all available classrooms effectively.
- Teachers are deployed appropriately to teach graphics subjects. The subject department is commended for its commitment to team-teaching particularly at senior cycle during the student assignment. This practice supported students and also facilitated the transfer of skills among teachers.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject planning is facilitated by school management through the scheduling of subject planning meetings. A subject co-ordinator has been identified who convenes and records the proceedings of meetings. The focus of these meetings is primarily on organisational and operational tasks. There is significant scope for the development of a pedagogical forum where instruction, assessment and learning are key components of the professional dialogue at these meetings.
- From the review of the subject department plan, it is evident that good progress has been made in the area of curricular planning with scope for further development to be made in the areas of educational inclusion, cross-curricular links and team-teaching approaches. While formal planning is uneven, the subject department has made good progress in practice. To strengthen subject planning overall, the subject department should work

towards ensuring that the subject plan reflects the good practices currently in embedded at subject level in lessons.

- The subject department regularly reviews student outcomes in certificate examinations in a focused manner. To gain more meaningful insights into student attainment and progress, this practice should be developed with a greater focus being placed on individual students and their abilities. To do so, the subject department should work collaboratively with the special educational needs team to develop a framework where appropriate expectations can be identified for each individual student. This information could then be used in conjunction with the recommended AfL practices.
- Teachers planning and preparation for all lessons observed was very good.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.