

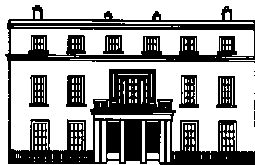
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Design and Communication
Graphics and Graphics and Construction Studies
REPORT**

**Newpark Comprehensive School,
Newtown Park Avenue,
Blackrock, Co. Dublin
Roll number: 81001I**

Date of inspection: 16 September 2013



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

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN DESIGN AND
COMMUNICATION GRAPHICS AND GRAPHICS AND CONSTRUCTION STUDIES

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	16 September 2013
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teacher• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- While there were some examples of good teaching in each lesson, there was scope for development in all lessons and inadequate levels of learning were observed in one lesson.
- The majority of students take higher level examinations in Design and Communication Graphics (DCG) and attainment rates are good at both higher and ordinary levels.
- Graphics subjects from part of the Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and established Leaving Certificate programmes.
- There is no provision for Technical Graphics in the school's junior cycle programme at present.
- Content based plans have been developed to outline the teaching of subject matter throughout the school year.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- All graphics lessons should be planned thoroughly focusing on: lesson design, planned student activities and the use of teaching aids that improve students' understanding, visualisation and concept attainment.
- Emphasis should be placed on identifying clear learning goals for students and designing lesson activities to reinforce these goals.
- The ongoing development of subject planning should prioritise the identification of desired learning outcomes, appropriate methodologies and modes of assessment for all areas of content.

INTRODUCTION

Newpark Comprehensive School currently offers graphics subjects as optional components within its Transition Year (TY) and established Leaving Certificate programmes and as an elective module within the school's Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. Currently, Technical Graphics (TG) does not form part of the school's junior cycle curriculum. The school has a current enrolment of 842 students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Three senior cycle graphics lessons were observed during the course of the evaluation. While there were examples of good teaching in each lesson, there was scope for development in all lessons.
- In one lesson, the standard of both teaching and learning was unsatisfactory. In this instance the lesson lacked a clear focus and the planned student activities did not contribute to the learning experience or supported the planned development of the subject matter.
- To ensure that learning is applied and reinforced in a meaningful manner, greater emphasis should be placed on planning students' classroom activities. All planned activities should help to develop students' understanding of key concepts, challenge their comprehension of content and provide them with the opportunity to learn in an active and experiential manner.
- Teaching aids and resources were utilised in all lessons observed. The improved utilisation of teaching aids to enhance the quality of both teaching and learning is an area that should be explored. Quality visual aids, accessible online at www.t4.ie, combined with physical models and various demonstration media including parametric modelling software and the classroom visualiser could be appropriately integrated into lessons to benefit students' visualisation and concept attainment.
- None of the three lessons observed included an introduction or focused summation. By including these two fundamental elements of lesson design in all future lessons, the subject department would provide students with opportunities to activate their prior learning and to reinforce lesson content. The resulting discussions would also provide the teacher with an opportunity to ascertain students' understanding and concept attainment. This facilitates the real-time assessment of newly introduced content, thereby enabling the teacher to modify future lessons based upon what the students' know and have learnt. Informal collaborative learning techniques were employed in one lesson observed. This is a positive initiative for the subject department. To improve students' experiences and to ensure that the activities are beneficial, additional planning and organisation of collaborative learning activities is necessary. Further emphasis should be placed upon developing student accountability and interdependence, and on clearly defining the desired learning outcomes for the lesson.
- While some efforts were made to highlight subject specific terminology, literacy strategies to maximise students' recognition and use of graphics specific terminology were not evident. One strategy, currently in use at school level, is the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) "Visual Verbal Square" technique. This strategy should be implemented in graphics lessons as students would already be familiar with its implementation in other subject areas.

- In the majority of lessons observed, classroom management was good. Where this was the case, students were actively engaged in productive tasks that helped to develop their skills and understanding. On the occasions when tasks were less engaging, a few students lost interest and became easily distracted.
- To promote and foster active discussion and collaboration, particularly among LCA students, alternative classroom layouts should be considered. The benefits of a more collaborative learning environment would promote students' tendencies to co-operate and to further develop their communication skills. An alternative classroom layout would also facilitate teacher circulation, thereby maximising opportunities to embed formative assessment in classroom practice.
- In recent years, the majority of students have taken the higher level DCG examination and overall, students have achieved well at their chosen level.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Graphics subjects are appropriately timetabled at senior cycle with adequate class periods assigned to all subjects.
- All senior cycle students have the opportunity to choose a graphics subject. In recent years, the number of students at junior cycle expressing an interest in choosing TG has been low. This has resulted in TG not forming part of the school's curriculum. School management expressed the hope that, with the considerable investment in the school's facilities and the development of purpose built specialist accommodation, the number of junior cycle students choosing TG will increase thereby enabling the school to offer the subject as part of its junior cycle curriculum in future years.
- Students enrolled in the school's TY programme are given the opportunity to study DCG. This helps students, who have not studied graphics at junior cycle, make more informed decisions on optional subjects prior to entering fifth year.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Content based schemes of work have been devised for each year group. These initial plans provide the subject department with a useful framework outlining the proposed completion dates for subject topics.
- The next phase of subject planning should focus on linking learning outcomes with the syllabus. When clear learning outcomes are stated, the subject department should match these with appropriate teaching aids and resources, suitable methodologies and assessment strategies. These plans should then be used in a cohesive manner to deliver the subject syllabuses.
- The TY plan focuses on aspects of product design. This plan should be reviewed to ensure that it provides students with an accurate indication of leaving certificate DCG. Suitable suggestions are available at www.t4.ie/dcg_tyo.html.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and the subject teacher at the conclusion of the evaluation. 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.

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