An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Art
REPORT

Saint Vincent’s Secondary School
Dundalk, County Louth
Roll number: 63900R

Date of inspection: 27 January 2016
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN ART

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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<td><strong>Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</strong></td>
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<td>• Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
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MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was of a very high quality.
- Students’ attainment in the subject is very good overall; the content and presentation of written work in copybooks, practical work in notebooks, and larger art pieces demonstrate purposeful, ongoing learning.
- Students’ work is assessed regularly and the quality of oral feedback provided to students was a significant strength in all of the lessons observed.
- The art department provides a highly commendable variety of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities to support achievement in Art.
- Teachers are engaged actively in facilitating, and participating in, continuing professional development (CPD) courses.
- A strong collaborative ethos was evident in the approach to subject planning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The art department should develop further strategies to engage students in using the formative feedback provided on their work so as to facilitate them to take better ownership of their learning.
- In planning, the art department should outline its expected learning outcomes in a differentiated manner thereby providing greater opportunity to identify specific outcomes for the full range of learner abilities.
INTRODUCTION

Saint Vincent’s is an all-girls voluntary secondary school with an enrolment of 915 students. The school offers the Junior and Leaving Certificate, Transition Year (TY) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programmes. Art is an optional subject for Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate. The subject is a mandatory component of the optional TY programme. Art is also studied by students in LCA.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was of a very high quality.

- Clear learning intentions were set and shared with students at the start of all lessons. This very good practice proved effective in supporting and assessing students’ learning, and clearly focused them on the knowledge and skills to be developed.

- In all of the lessons, classroom management was effective with clearly established routines evident. A highly stimulating and purposeful learning environment was apparent. Students’ artwork is exhibited to very good effect in the art rooms and in designated areas around the school.

- Teachers had very high expectations of their students’ engagement and co-operation in all of the lessons observed. Teacher-student rapport was mutually respectful but was also appropriately friendly. Teachers were most affirming of students’ contributions and efforts.

- Students’ learning was found to be of a very high quality. They displayed skills in using a variety of media and demonstrated knowledge of material appropriateness for set tasks. Their attainment in the subject is very good overall; the content and presentation of written work in copybooks, practical work in notebooks and larger art pieces demonstrate purposeful, ongoing learning.

- Students’ work is assessed regularly and the quality of oral feedback provided to students was a significant strength in all of the lessons observed. This feedback provided support while maintaining the high expectations set for students.

- Homework is assigned and monitored regularly. There were some high-quality examples of constructive feedback on students’ work. To build on this good practice, it is recommended that the art department develop further strategies to engage students in using this feedback to facilitate them in taking better ownership of their learning.

- A combination of higher-order and lower-order questioning was used in most lessons to encourage students to reflect on and to show an understanding of their artwork. There is scope to develop further use of higher-order questions to promote deep critical-thinking skills in all lessons.

- Good differentiated teaching was observed. There was provision of one-to-one support to students who needed additional assistance, as well as appropriate challenge for others to extend their work in all of the lessons observed. Best practice was observed in instances where the teacher differentiated instructions using both written and visual cues on the students’ artwork so they understood what was expected of them, and how they were to achieve their lesson target.
• Students are making very good progress in Art. Deliberate efforts are made to challenge students of all abilities to do their best. Participation rates at higher level in the certificate examinations are very good; notably positive trends in student attainment are evident.

• An emphasis on the development of students’ literacy skills was a feature of all the lessons observed. Students demonstrated a knowledge and understanding of subject-specific language whilst discussing and writing about artwork. To further support the literacy focus of the department, it would be beneficial to provide additional opportunities to allow students to critique their own art work aloud, as well as the work of other artists, thereby further enriching students’ oral skills.

• There was a very good emphasis on integrating relevant mathematical concepts during the lessons observed. In one lesson, for example, students identified pattern in both the natural and man-made world and this investigation led to discussions about symmetry and balance. This approach linked the lesson content with relevant mathematical concepts seamlessly.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

• The overall quality of whole-school support and for the provision of Art is very good. Teachers are deployed to provide continuity for class groups.

• The art department provides a highly commendable variety of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities to support achievement in Art. It facilitates students by helping them prepare portfolios and enter competitions. The teachers of Art have also developed strategies to promote associations with past pupils of Art; these role models are invited back to participate in various projects. Such linkages help to enhance students’ appreciation and understanding of Art outside the classroom.

• Health and safety procedures are very well established for art lessons. The health and safety procedures in the art department, to include a risk assessment for each specialist room, should be reviewed annually.

• The art department displays great enthusiasm in its work and is dedicated to promoting Art within the school. Teachers are engaged actively in facilitating, and participating in, CPD courses. It was evident from discussions with the art department and school management that teachers share resources and expertise in planning for the teaching and learning of Art.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

• The overall quality of planning and preparation was good. The art rooms, the development of classroom resources, the storage of artwork, and presentation of class materials were found to be very well organised.

• Good records of students’ progress are maintained. These records are analysed and used in setting targets for students. As a development to this good practice, these results should now be shared with the students to plan individual learning goals and to encourage them to take more ownership of their learning.

• The department’s commendable focus on developing students’ numeracy should be documented in the subject plans, as is the case with literacy development.
A strong collaborative ethos in the approach to subject planning was evident. Schemes of work have been developed which outline general and specific learning outcomes for all year groups. To build on this good practice and support students’ learning, it is recommended that, in its planning, the art department should outline its expected learning outcomes in a differentiated manner thereby providing greater opportunity to identify specific outcomes for the full range of learner abilities.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and deputy principal and team of teachers 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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

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Appendix

School response to the report

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

The Board notes with great satisfaction that the Inspector found “the quality of teaching and learning observed was of a very high quality”. The Board concurs with this finding especially in the context of the Board’s analysis of the 2015 Certificate Examination results.

The Board believes these results are due in no small measure to the quality of teaching and learning and as the inspector noted in the report ‘A highly commendable variety of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities to support achievement in Art’. The Board particularly wishes to acknowledge the very successful exhibition of student, past student and teachers work mounted in the school’s permanent exhibition space which serves to support high standards in St Vincent’s Art Department.

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

St Vincent’s Art Teachers are working to implement the main recommendations in the report.