

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of ART
REPORT**

**Mountrath Community School
Co. Laois**

Roll number: 91550B

Date of inspection: 17 October 2011



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	17 th October, 2011.
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 4 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Much good teaching and learning were seen during the inspection and students were well managed, engaged and impressively on-task during lessons.
- Classroom management and lesson preparation were good, contributing to a productive, positive learning environment.
- Course delivery, for which a documented plan has been prepared, is undertaken in a conscientious way.
- Two extensive rooms with excellent ICT and storage facilities have been provided for the art department.
- The principal is very supportive of the subject and aspires to the development, enrichment and further enhancement of its contribution to academic and personal development of students.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Overuse of secondary sources needs to be addressed. It is recommended that teaching strategies in pro-active working methods be devised to support students effectively in project-mode learning. This is also to ensure that creative and self-expressive use of the art elements become habitual for all year groups
 - A practical strategy for ICT with a clear emphasis on strengthening learning conditions for students of all aptitudes should be devised and implemented.
 - Balance between the perceptual, technical and self-expressive aspects of art-learning should be an essential feature in the further development of the art department plan. All review and development should be the joint responsibility of art department personnel.
 - The importance of learning outcomes in subject planning needs to be re-emphasised. Learning outcomes should be used as the basis for constructing assessment criteria in order to forge an enhanced fit between teaching, learning and assessment. A department-wide strategy for setting assessment standards in relation to different student aptitudes should be formalised in the subject plan.
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INTRODUCTION

Mountrath Community School was amalgamated from three long-established schools, and is sole provider of second level education in a wide rural area. Transition Year (TY) is offered.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Conscientious work is being done in teaching the formal art elements. Teaching strategies should be devised to ensure that creative and self-expressive use of these elements becomes habitual from early first year onwards. In tandem with this, enabling students in pro-active working methods is now a necessary support for their successful engagement in project work.
- There was generally too much reliance on secondary sources for imagery across all year groups. This must be addressed through planning for skills development that enables artefact creation using predominantly primary sources, observation and imagination. More emphasis on good design procedures for senior cycle crafts and junior cycle options is also necessary to empower students to creative effectiveness.
- All art personnel should habitually use the excellent ICT facilities to the maximum extent for supporting student learning. It is recommended that a practical strategy for ICT be implemented with the objective of strengthening the learning opportunities for students of all abilities.
- The number of crafts practised in the art department should be extended.
- The omnipresence of secondary sources for generation of imagery should be pro-actively challenged and instead, in most instances, artefacts should be derived from observation and imagination.
- Impressive group-work and discussion were seen in an exploratory task about product design; a high level of preparation ensured its success as a challenging and deep-learning experience for senior students.
- There is a need to re-envisage the type of learning activities younger students encounter. The structured approach to art elements delivery dominates early learning in the art department. This needs to be reviewed in order to balance knowledge of art elements with the vigorously creative and self-expressive use of these.
- In some lessons links were made with contemporary art practice and historical sources. This approach to developing students' encounter with visual culture should be habitually co-related with artefact creation.
- Rigorous consideration and analysis of the age appropriateness, the motivational effects, and the value to learning that all assignments and activities ultimately provide to students, should be undertaken.
- Design skills and craft techniques should be taught symbiotically. A high level of age appropriate skills in these areas should be consistently demanded.
- Shared approaches to teaching, to planning and to enhancing learning should be further developed. The department plan should be a joint responsibility of staff.
- A wide range of student aptitude, motivation and engagement was evident. Some differentiation was practised by teachers, in that individual attention was given to

students. A more focussed department-wide strategy for setting standards and assessment criteria in relation to differing student aptitudes should be enshrined in the plan.

- More variety of media in art, design and craft needs to be presented to students in their courses. An over-emphasis on a few crafts is now unacceptable and unnecessary, given that space and budget can accommodate student encounter with others.
- Regular assessment takes place during the school year. This supports students' reflection on their progress and attainment.
- Homework and class-work are checked and annotated, which is good practice.
- Assessment criteria should be based on learning outcomes, in order to provide an enhanced fit between teaching, learning and assessment.
- Balance between perceptual, technical, artistic and self-expressive aspects of art and design learning should be central to the development of a comprehensive and student-friendly, rather than a narrow, examination-driven approach.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The principal is strongly supportive of Art and aspires to further enhancement, development and enrichment of its contribution to academic and personal development of students.
- Timetabling supports the subject well. Art is popular among students as is evidenced by large junior cycle groups.
- More work could be done by the art department in raising standards and expectations, and in assiduously presenting the subject as a useful and developmental learning opportunity for students of all aptitudes and vocational aspirations.
- Spacious rooms have been provided for the subject.
- Excellent ICT facilities are in place. An action plan for maximising their use to promote varied, enriched and deep learning for all aptitudes would enhance current practice.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Some lesson plans were available for the inspection.
- The department plan is good on allocation of time to activities, ensuring that coverage of examination essentials and timeframes are achieved.
- Long-term planning for the subject to encourage more productive learning and assessment outcomes, better realisation of the breadth and balance of syllabus aims and objectives, and more reflective practice generally is required to make the art department evenly effective.
- Both teachers should collaborate as joint co-ordinators on upgrading the department plan and on enhancing and updating delivery methods.
- Planning for the teaching and integration of appreciation of art and design in courses and programmes should be further developed and included in the documentation.

- The department plan should be rigorously cross-referenced with the aims of the Junior Certificate syllabus and TY documentation, in order to ensure that all courses have the necessary breadth and balance.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject 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; a response was not received from the board.

