

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of ART
REPORT**

**Saint Paul's Secondary School
Monasterevin, County Kildare
Roll number: 61702D**

Date of inspection: 17 May 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 May 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 three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Art has been offered as a timetabled subject option for the past three years at St Paul's Secondary School. Access to Art has been open and Art has proved popular with students of all abilities. The students displayed enthusiasm and were engaged during the evaluation by the competent delivery of lessons.
- The art department has been well supported by management in its start-up initial stage. Resources for Art have been put in place to facilitate student encounter with media and materials, co-curricular activities, and preparation for state examination candidature.
- A strong emphasis on art-elements drawing and on teaching and learning of other basic skills needs to be augmented with stronger emphasis on creativity, self-expression and work from imagination rather than from secondary sources, which are overused.
- The art department has an energetic and friendly atmosphere and students are motivated and engaged.
- Students' work is monitored as it progresses and feedback is given. Evaluative commentary helps students to progress effectively through assignments.
- Planning documents, which suffice as a basis for teaching and learning should be further enriched and extended.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students' higher-order skills should to be developed in parallel with basic skills in order to develop personal self-expressive creativity, as an enhancement of current practice.
 - The breadth and balance of the Junior Certificate art syllabus should be central to the planning process. The syllabus document should be used as the key reference point for course outlines and lesson planning.
 - ICT should be planned for as a resource for teaching and learning with a view to extending and enriching students' experience of Art.
 - The planning document should be developed by the addition of learning outcomes and differentiation, and by attention to time management of assignments.
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INTRODUCTION

St. Paul's is a voluntary secondary co-educational day school serving the town of Monasterevin and a wide rural area. Students also enrol from other nearby towns. Transition Year programme is offered as an option. Overall, the establishment of the new art department has been productive. With enrichment from information and communication technology (ICT) sources, the Art department will be better positioned to initiate the delivery of senior cycle Art.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Art is competently and conscientiously delivered with an emphasis on the art elements and technical skills development.
- Students are given opportunities to encounter a range of materials and media, and have benefited from the teaching style and the encouraging atmosphere of the art department. The space makes some 3D work challenging. Pragmatically, crafts that are accommodated best by the facilities are practised.
- As observed during the evaluation, communication with students is good and features thorough explanations. Correct terminology appropriate to the specialised technical and aesthetic content of the subject was used. But while the vocabulary used was good, strategies to get students to understand, remember and use it were not. It is recommended that this aspect of practice be strengthened.
- There is a strong emphasis on art-elements teaching and learning and on colour work in course delivery. Students have developed technical skills in line with their aptitude and motivation. There was a good profile of attainment overall in these skills and in art elements.
- The starting point for imagery development was largely secondary sources. More primary sources should be used in generating images. It is recommended that teaching should focus on guiding students' project work towards topics that can be developed from primary sources. Recourse to secondary sources should be limited and a balance between closed-ended assignments and exploratory and open-ended assignments achieved.
- While basic skills have been mastered by many students, they were less well skilled in working from imagination and primary sources rather than from photography or web-derived secondary sources. Higher order skills should be developed in parallel with basic skills, particularly for students of higher aptitude in order to develop autonomous self-expressive creativity. It is recommended that this be part of an improvement of current practice.
- Long-running assignments should be infrequently set in favour of skills-focussed assignments. Adherence to stricter completion time frames will facilitate coverage of a wider range of topics and media. It is recommended that, when students have understood the principles of the assignment and have made significant progress, completion of assignments as homework may frequently be viable, freeing up class time for new learning topics.
- Students' work is monitored as it progresses, and feedback is given. Evaluative commentary helped students to progress effectively through assignments. Students were also well advised of requirements for imminent summer tests, and were encouraged to prepare for these. This is all good practice and supportive of learning.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- St Paul's has, most commendably, devoted scarce spatial resources to accommodating Art, which has been established as a timetabled curricular option for the past three years. Access to the subject is good and time is adequately allocated to it. The principal is attuned to the needs of the developing subject. Artworks are displayed throughout the public area of the school.
- ICT was due to be installed shortly in the art room. This will enable teaching and learning procedures to be modernised. It is recommended that the art department continue to develop skills and extend current experience of pedagogy, ICT and art through continuous professional development, particularly as Leaving Certificate may soon be available for the current cohort of students.
- The confined space of the art room and the students' natural enthusiasm pose several challenges to classroom management.
- Basic course delivery is competent. However, more emphasis on learning processes, learning outcomes and creating optimum conditions for learning would support the good work that has been done in establishing the basic standards in the art department, and to develop these further.
- Good assessment records are kept by the school and the subject department. Analysis of 2011 Junior Certificate Art, Craft and Design results should be detailed, and focus where necessary on improvement.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning documents were made available during the inspection. The outline plan provides a good starting point but needs to be developed and enriched. A focus on the needs of the students should be reflected in the document, rather than a general-content plan. The current plan should be enriched by the inclusion of learning outcomes for students of all abilities.
- Assessment criteria used to assess class tests and end-of-term examinations should be based on documented learning outcomes in the department plan. In planning assessment strategy, clear distinction should be made between assessment for learning and for accreditation.
- It is recommended that the breadth and balance of the Junior Certificate art syllabus should be central to the planning process. The syllabus document should be used as a reference point for course outlines and planning of lessons. Clarity about how syllabus objectives might be realised in St. Paul's needs to inform planning. All facets of the syllabus need to be delivered. An over-emphasis on examination criteria rather than syllabus aims needs to be reversed.
- It is recommended that planning for Art should factor in differentiation for class groups. More attention needs to be paid in planning to the complete syllabus aims and objectives and to the development of a good differentiation and assessment culture.

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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Published February 2012

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of St Paul's Secondary School welcomes this report by the Inspectorate. The experienced advice and recommendations provided by the inspector give guidance to the Art teacher and will further enhance the provision of this subject.

Art was introduced into the school curriculum in 2008 as an optional subject to the Junior Certificate. The number of students opting for Art has increased steadily with two classes of the current first years. Our students are to be commended for their work ethic and on going contribution to the life of St Paul's and in the development of a stimulating and creative school environment through their Art work. The results for the first cohort of Junior Cert students are very encouraging.

The Board of Management acknowledges the dedication and commitment of the Art teacher to the establishment of the subject. It also acknowledges the considerable time and work that has been spent by the Art teacher in the establishment of a comprehensive subject department plan and her commitment to cross curricular and extra curricular activities.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

The Board of Management of St Paul's Secondary School welcome the recommendations in the report. The following actions have been taken since the initial inspection.

- ICT is now in place in the Art room; laptop, colour printer, data projector and access to a visualiser. This has already further enhanced and enriched the pupils' learning and their overall art experience.
- The Art department plan is currently under review, the addition of learning outcomes to the yearly plans has commenced.
- A sketch book/visual diary is now being used to aid students with their homework and time management of projects.

The following actions are planned to address other recommendations.

- Junior Certificate syllabus will be further utilised as a reference point for student's projects and as a basis for lesson planning throughout the year, this will also be incorporated into the subject department plan.
- To promote maximum learning, tasks and projects will address the students' level of development and ability. Projects will be further altered to the individual students needs to ensure success and to further encourage students to excel in Art.