

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of ART
REPORT**

Heywood Community School

Ballinakill, County Laois

Roll number: 91427C

Date of inspection: 17 November 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 November 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 six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The dedication and professionalism of the art teachers has created enthusiasm for the subject; demand for Art often outstrips availability.
- There was a good learning atmosphere, good communication and a supportive, personal approach to the management of students during art lessons. Students were hardworking, engaged and on task.
- Good art department planning is taking place.
- Art lessons for some students take place in a general-purpose classroom. This restricts crafts, painting and 3D, poses organisational challenges for course delivery and disadvantages students in their state examinations candidature.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ceramics and clay should be developed as a special strength of the department.
 - The value-to-learning of all activities and assignments should be thoroughly reviewed.
 - The planning document could valuably be updated and reviewed to reflect current staffs' strengths and skills.
 - The customisation of a general classroom as a second art room should be considered in the long term.
-

INTRODUCTION

Heywood Community School serves a wide rural hinterland in County Laois. It is a co-educational school currently with an enrolment of 684 students. It offers an optional Transition Year (TY) and a wide range of academic, technical, arts and scientific subjects.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The dedication and professionalism of the teachers has created an enthusiasm for the subject and demand for Art among the students is strong.
- Very good ceramics was seen and it is clear that the art department has aptitude for nurturing the skills necessary for really strong attainment in this medium. Thus it is recommended that work in clay, both hand building of pottery and clay modelling, be developed in planning and practice as a special strength of the department.
- Very good links were made with popular visual culture in a TY lesson inspected. Information and communication technology (ICT) was well utilised to engage and stimulate TY students, many of whom had not studied Art before.
- ICT was used very well in some lessons. Planning for its more extensive use is recommended.
- Good work was done in teaching the techniques for using pastels, linked with historical images. This was a very good learning challenge for students and balanced technical with cultural knowledge.
- Students were hardworking, engaged and on task.
- There was a good learning atmosphere, good communication and a supportive, personal approach to the management of students during lessons.
- Drawing from primary sources is well taught: first-year drawings showed excellent attainment in this mode. However, the almost exclusive reliance on secondary sources in third-year projects indicates that these impressive skill levels are not continued on or utilised in the creative and expressive context of the project. More primary sources should be used; this principle applies to all year groups and levels. Working from imagination and observation needs to be made the primary route for image generation, in keeping with syllabus requirements.
- Drawing skills of older students were weak, lacked confidence generally and did not reflect age-appropriate development of the basic perceptual and technical skills that are obviously so well taught in first year. It is recommended that effective links between drawing skills and imagery generation from observation and from imagination are now developed as a priority for planning in order that the good work done in first year is brought to a satisfactory stage of development. In short, strategies for linking basic skills with creative, higher-order usage of these should be a priority for the art department.
- It is commendable that the expansion of students' artistic vocabulary is listed as an objective in the planning document. The potential of art and design activities for improving numeracy should now be planned for at an age-appropriate level.
- Basic technical skills and the formal art elements are well delivered in teaching; using these in a creative way as habitual artistic behaviour for developing ideas visually was less well achieved, as evidenced by the ubiquitous use of secondary sources. Pro-active

correction of this now needs to be undertaken. Higher-order skills should be developed in parallel with basic ones, particularly in order to nurture autonomous, self-expressive creativity, and to utilise the real self-development potential of the subject. It is recommended that this be part of an improvement of current practice.

- It is recommended that teaching should focus on actively guiding students' project work towards topics that can be developed from primary sources and imagination. Too much internet downloading dominates the process of exploring examination themes at present. Recourse to secondary sources should be limited. A balance between closed-ended assignments and exploratory, open-ended assignments achieved in students' work in all year groups.
- The value-to-learning of all activities and assignments should be reviewed. Clear learning outcomes should be set out in course planning, with a view to the measured development of students' perceptual, technical, artistic and cultural skills.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- A full-time and a part-time art teacher are employed. Timetable and budget for the subject are good. The art department has a whole-school profile which is appreciated by senior management.
- Art is a popular subject in Heywood Community School; such is the demand that not all students can be accommodated. The school has one art-specific room allowing a wide range of crafts and 3D media to be pursued. Art lessons are also held in a general purpose classroom with no running water or facilities for crafts and 3D. Delivering the breadth and balance necessary in the curriculum is challenging in these circumstances, and students are put at a learning and state examinations disadvantage. It is recommended that, when resources and opportunity become available, that basic customising of a general classroom for Art be undertaken.
- The art department has been well supported by management and resources have been put in place to facilitate student encounter with media and materials, co-curricular activities, and preparation for state examination candidature.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A department planning document covers key areas and, commendably, provides a good level of detail. It is recommended that this plan be revised to fully encompass the skills and specialities of current department personnel. Modernising and updating the plan, and including the recommended adjustments from this inspection, should now be a priority, as the strengths and attitudes of current staff will naturally bring the practice of the department to a higher level to the learning advantage of students.
- Closer reference to the Junior Certificate art syllabus needs now to be made in daily and long-term planning to ensure that its intended breadth and balance is fully delivered.
- Conscientious planning for the lessons inspected was evident.
- The variety of crafts students encounter should be extended and care taken not to repeat crafts done at junior cycle again in senior cycle. It is recommended that extending the range of crafts studied is now planned for.

- It is recommended that the Edwin Lutyens-designed formal gardens in the grounds become a stronger part, at an age-appropriate level, of practical art-making and design-appreciation learning. The potential of this unique resource is underestimated at present; opportunities need to be devised through research and planning to exploit the garden's artistic value for learning. TY students particularly would benefit from cross-curricular engagement with this National Monument.

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

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report.

The Board and the Principal were generally satisfied with the main findings of the report.

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

No available space or funding for a second art room.

Ceramics and clay sculpture are now part of the long term plan for the Art Department and have currently been introduced in senior cycle and TY. The planning document has been updated also (May 2012)