

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Art
REPORT**

**Castlerea Community School
Castlerea
Co. Roscommon**

Roll number: 91493P

Date of inspection: 10 December 2010



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

SUBJECT INSPECTION REPORT

This report has been written following a subject inspection in Castlerea Community School. It presents the findings of an evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning in Art and makes recommendations for the further development of the teaching of this subject in the school. The evaluation was conducted over one day during which the inspector visited classrooms and observed teaching and learning. The inspector interacted with students and teachers, examined students' work, and had discussions with the teachers. The inspector reviewed school planning documentation and teachers' written preparation. Following the evaluation visit, the inspector provided oral feedback on the outcomes of the evaluation to the principal and subject teachers. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

The principal is aware and insightful of the needs of Art as a subject, and has noted the creative opportunities available through it to students of all aptitudes. The principal keeps in touch with the activities and the operation of the art department as a matter of course throughout the school year, and has a good knowledge for how conditions should be for optimal learning in Art. This is very positive and in the long term will augment the development of art education in the school. The contribution of the art department to the social and cultural life of the school is lauded, as well as its direct input to the personal and academic development of the students who elect to study art and design

There is good allocation of time and resources, and uptake of the subject is healthy. The school has provided good facilities and budget for the support of the subject. A range of crafts, 2D and 3D media and design are available.

The substitution arrangements in place at the time of the inspection were working out extremely well and the continuity of the work of the art department had been developed and enhanced, to the advantage of students' learning opportunities, both long and short term.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Adequate planning has been prepared and documented by the art department and this is commended. However, it would add greatly to the potential of students to further benefit from their study of Art if learning outcomes were clarified and specifically defined for the planned activities, assignments and projects. When defined, further refinement of these learning outcomes should then be made for students of different aptitudes and motivational levels, in order that the teaching, lesson content, and pace can be adjusted to the learning needs of individual learners. A more conscious emphasis in supporting learning through planning is recommended.

It is recommended that the appreciation of art and design be given strong identity as a component of the learning students undertake in both junior and senior cycle, and that this should be planned for in the context of differentiation for students' learning needs.

In order to counteract any tendency in the practice of the art department to over-emphasise the requirements of the assessment criteria of the state examination, it is recommended that the Junior Certificate syllabus document be made central to planning for ensuring breadth and balance in junior cycle learning.

There was good preparation for all lessons and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) had been carefully researched planned and structured. This is very impressive practice.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The lessons seen were models of good content and presentation and extremely effective in eliciting high quality engagement from students, who worked in a motivated way throughout. Creative, lively and well thought-out ideas formed the foundation of the lessons. Good communication ensured that explanation and clarification of ideas and concepts supported student engagement, learning and attainment.

The classes were effectively managed, materials and equipment were well prepared and organised, and time available was efficiently used. The pace of the lessons was good

There was a very good learning atmosphere in the art department, and students were given both individual and group attention. Students with special learning needs were totally integrated into the proceedings of the classes.

Very good, and at times inspired, use of ICT was made in presenting lessons and defining assignments. Inclusive discussions evolved from PowerPoint presentations and students contributed articulately and fluently. A variety of methodologies, notably group work and action learning, was integral to the lessons. The use of ICT to establish and develop the theme of some of the lessons was impressively comprehensive, stimulating for the students, and well integrated into the learning process.

On the day of the inspection, in one year group, a very effective learning experience was based on the actual hands-on experience of stencil printing. The design aspect of this complex and quite challenging task had been covered in the preceding lessons and students were in the process of executing the ideas developed and prepared beforehand. The printing, when realised, was then the foundation for stitching and appliqué, and this composite of media was a valuable learning experience for the mixed-ability students. The class group was well managed, the practical aspects of arranging and conducting it were flawless, and the level of help and advice given both to individuals and to the group as a whole was appropriately pitched and very supportive of the varied levels of competence across the full range of student aptitude.

The communication skills and appropriateness of language and expression were effective in transmitting the messages of the lessons inspected. Students participated well in all aspects of the lessons and were willing to contribute verbally. Many showed from their articulate statements that they had some previous experience in making statements and discussing details; all of which reflects well on the habitual practices over time in the art department.

Good paper and photographic reproduction-based resources were seen in storage for history and appreciation of art topics, and these are valuable in delivery of historical information. ICT has the potential to expand, enrich and diversify these resources and to create a learner-friendly ambience for those often challenging materials. It is recommended that the good practice observed in the use of ICT be expanded and that the art department develop a short-term and long-term strategy to maximise the use of ICT as a tool for delivering classroom content and as a vehicle for student exploration and learning.

It is recommended that the appreciation of art component of the Leaving Certificate history and appreciation of art course be taught in fifth year so that students build up a foundation of knowledge and skills that will later support more effective learning of historical material. These skills are of a perceptual and aesthetic nature and provide general insights into art and design that enhance student understanding and engagement. It is desirable that students from early in first year would develop knowledge and skills based on a wide encounter with the visual arts. ICT is one route that can support the integration of this element of artistic learning into students experience and which can contribute to their confidence and engagement with art making.

ASSESSMENT

Regular assessment, including end-of-term examinations and mock examinations, takes place during the school year. A variety of assessment procedures, including continuous assessment based on class work and examinations, is in use in the art department. There are written examinations for the history and appreciation of art component of the Leaving Certificate programme. Students are monitored closely during the Junior Certificate project. Continual assessment is carried out throughout the year on practical and written work. There are systematic records of students' assessment and examination results. End-of-term and end-of-year results are communicated to parents and guardians. Regular parent-teacher meetings are held and the art department provides discussion, feedback and advice at these.

In order to further develop assessment practice, initiating some element of self assessment for students that would, in the long term, enhance their own engagement with trying to improve is recommended. A simple questionnaire that would focus students' attention on where they have underperformed and that would encourage reflection about concrete steps they might take to address this, should be considered

Distinguishing between the *Assessment for Learning* (AfL) and assessment for State Examinations Commission accreditation could valuably be made in planning assessment strategy to improve learning outcomes for all students. It is recommended that the website of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is consulted by the art department when developing this distinction between assessment types.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the main strengths identified in the evaluation:

- The substitution arrangements the school had in place at the time of the inspection were good and the work of the art department had been developed and enhanced, to the advantage of students' learning opportunities.

- The lessons seen were models of good content and presentation, extremely effective in eliciting high quality engagement from students, who worked in a motivated way throughout. Creative, lively and well thought-out ideas formed the foundation of the lessons. Good communication ensured that explanation and clarification of ideas and concepts supported student engagement, learning and attainment.
- Very good use of ICT was made in presenting lessons and defining assignments. Inclusive discussions evolved from PowerPoint presentations and students contributed articulately and fluently. A variety of methodologies, notably group work and action learning, were integral to the lessons.
- The school has provided good facilities and budget for the support of the subject. A range of crafts, 2D and 3D media and design are available.
- There was a great learning atmosphere in the art department, and students were given both individual and group attention. Students with special learning needs were totally integrated into the proceedings of the classes.
- The classes were effectively managed, materials and equipment were well prepared and organised, and time available was efficiently used. The pace of the lessons was good

As a means of building on these strengths and to address areas for development, the following key recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the good practice observed in the use of ICT becomes an integrated part of the delivery of courses, particularly the appreciation of art and design from first year onwards, and the history and appreciation of art in senior cycle.
- It is recommended that the Junior Certificate syllabus document be made central to planning for ensuring breadth and balance in junior cycle learning.
- It is recommended that the planning documents provide well-developed and defined learning outcomes for all activities and assignments.
- It is recommended that the appreciation of art component of the Leaving Certificate history and appreciation of art course be taught in fifth year so that students build up a foundation of knowledge and skills that will later support more effective learning of historical material.

Post-evaluation meetings were held with the teacher of Art and the principal at the conclusion of the evaluation when the draft findings and recommendations of the evaluation were presented and discussed.