

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Art
REPORT**

**Carndonagh Community School
Carndonagh, County Donegal
Roll number: 91406R**

Date of inspection: 12 November 2010



**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

SUBJECT INSPECTION REPORT

This report has been written following a subject inspection in Carndonagh Community School. It presents the findings of an evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning in Art. 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 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.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

Carndonagh Community School has an enrolment of 471 males and 483 females. The school offers a full range of programmes which includes the Junior Certificate, The Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational programme (LCVP), and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. Art is an optional subject on all of these programmes except for the TY programme and the LCA programme: in these two cases, all students study a module of Art.

The art department is staffed by two committed and diligent specialist art teachers. Senior management has very effectively supported the department by for example, providing good opportunities for in-service. As a result these teachers regularly engage in continuing professional development to enhance the provision of teaching and learning in Art for students. The art department enjoys a very high profile in the school. This profile is supported by the art department's provision of exhibitions of each year group's completed work in communal areas of the school. Such celebration of students' efforts and achievement is very good work.

The numbers of students taking Art are very healthy and access to the subject is good. Senior management ensures that students and their parents are provided with a number of opportunities and methods to access guidance and information about the consequences of subject choice decisions. In addition, the school makes good efforts to ensure that students' subject choices are matched by the school's provision.

Timetabling for Art is good. Double periods are provided to enable teaching and learning of the practical aspects of the syllabuses. Students on the TY programme are provided with a module of Art which lasts approximately half the academic school year. This gives TY students a good opportunity to fully experience the subject.

Two very well appointed, bright, purpose-built adjoining rooms are provided for Art. The levels of maintenance, organisation and display in these rooms have resulted in the provision of very high-quality learning environments for students. The high standard of presentation of students' work and exemplars exhibited in these rooms contribute to the stimulation and inspiration of students. For example, art terminology is very cleverly illustrated using visual meanings of the words. The rooms are attractive and inviting and teachers' efforts to achieve this optimal level of provision are lauded.

Funding for equipment and consumable materials is provided for the art department via an annual budget prepared by the department. It is noted that although each of the teachers has a designated art room, each teacher can access the others' room via a link door between the rooms. Teachers use this facility so that they can have ready access to shared equipment and materials for students. This collegial sharing of resources represents best practice.

The provision of (ICT) for the art department is good. Students and teachers have ready access in both of the art rooms to ICT for the purposes of research and image manipulation which is very useful. In addition the rooms are furnished with interactive white boards which are most useful for a visual subject such as Art. During the evaluation it was reported that digital cameras and image manipulation software were planned for and due for delivery to the art department. This is very good provision for Art and will be of great benefit to students.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

With the support and guidance of the principal, the level of collaboration between the teachers in the art department is very high and a strong subject department culture has been established. All of the work of the art department is shared between the two teachers and is clearly focussed on providing the best art education possible to the students in their care. It was evident during the evaluation that this level of collaborative planning contributes significantly to good teaching and learning in Art and to students' achievement in the subject.

The art department plan presented during the evaluation was evidence of the high standard of planning and administration at the art department. The teachers have developed a very good philosophy of art education for students at the school. This philosophy is based on observation, development and a very high standard of finish and presentation. This approach supports the development of students' aesthetic sensibilities and has resulted in very high quality completed work by students across all levels of ability and development.

The curricular plans for students of Art were characterised by very good interpretations of the syllabuses. Students' interests and motivations are considered at the planning stage so that students have every chance to engage successfully in projects and tasks. It is very good to note that the art department engages in specific planning for students with special educational needs at both ends of the spectrum. Good collaboration with the special education needs department supports this work. Teachers' individual plans were framed using the subject plan, teachers' individual interpretations of the subject plan and daily notes. This facilitates the accurate tracking of students' teaching and learning. It is clear that a respect for students' learning and progress is to the fore of all planning. This represents optimal practice.

The art department has generated a collection of documents and notes to help students proceed effectively. These notes referred to aspects of practical work as well as the history and appreciation of art and design aspect of the Leaving Certificate Art, Craft and Design syllabus.

These notes can be presented to students using ICT and represent very good preparation for students' study of the topic.

It is clear that the art department places a very high value on the exhibiting of students' work. This good approach helps to build confidence in students' abilities and helps to maintain the high profile of the subject in the school. The regular exhibiting of students' work also helps students of Art to understand and aspire to the high standard set in the art department. This very good strategy is supported by senior management who is very conscious of the important contribution that the art department makes to the life of the school.

The art department provides a wide range of extracurricular and co-curricular activities to support students' experience and achievement in Art. This includes the design and implementation of a number of high quality attractive murals in the school. Students are encouraged to participate in local and national competitions in which a number of students have been very successful. Students of Art are also involved in designing and producing sets and props for musicals. Collaboration with other departments means that students have good access to a wider range of materials and equipment for their studies. Of particular note, a very significant number of students from the school have been accepted onto art and art-related courses at third level. The work that is required to achieve a place in art college is prepared at the school with the generous help of the art department. Studying art at third level is indicative of students' positive and successful experience of the subject in the school and is a testament to the work of the art teachers.

The history and appreciation of art is integrated through lessons from first year. Students in both junior cycle and senior cycle are encouraged to make two-dimensional and three-dimensional responses to elements of art history which is very good practice.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Four lessons were observed during the evaluation. The quality of teaching and learning was very good. Teachers make every effort possible to support students' progress.

A very positive classroom atmosphere was evident in all of the lessons visited. Teachers had a very good rapport with students and respect characterised all of the activities of the art room. It was clear from the behaviour of teachers and students during lessons that learning is the priority and there was a very clear sense that all students were expected to progress to the best of their ability. Students were affirmed regularly in a supportive and genuine manner and as a result were content in their learning. This caring approach to students' welfare and progress is commended.

In all cases classroom management was very good. During lessons students were very well behaved, relaxed and engaged in their work. Teachers carefully monitored the work of the group and individuals as appropriate. In a very small number of instances students needed to be redirected. This was carried out effectively in a very firm and fair manner. Good lesson structure was used to keep students on task. Students were encouraged to retrieve and return their work and materials during lessons. They carried out this in a calm and responsible manner. This supports students' sense of responsibility and is good work.

Demonstration was the main teaching methodology used. All of the demonstrations observed were stimulating with clear instructions. It is noted that demonstrations included the use of a very wide range of relevant materials. This use of materials in demonstrations helped to motivate

students and supported differentiation. Very high quality visual aids were used in all cases. It was noted that teachers' own art work was used effectively to show techniques to students. This is a very good strategy to help inspire students. In summary, the demonstrations observed were of a very high quality.

During the evaluation very high quality communication was used by teachers. Information presented to students was clear, accurate and well pitched. In addition, the very high quality visual aids used further enabled students to understand concepts and topics.

Teachers were keen to encourage students to use their observation skills to improve their work. This strategy was very successful in the lessons observed and it is obvious from the students' work presented that this is a significant element of all lessons. This is very good practice.

It was noted during all of the lessons observed that teachers chose to teach specific skills using materials and subject matter which are of interest to students. This resulted in students having a very enthusiastic approach to their work. The approach also supported the development of independent learning by giving students greater ownership over their work.

The quality of students' learning in all areas of the syllabuses is of a very high standard across the ability spectrum. It is positive to note that students are skilled in and display positive attitudes towards areas such as design and the history and appreciation of art which can be challenging for students. Students' completed work is expressive, skilful, informed and aesthetically pleasing. This shows that students are achieving to their potential. Students are also performing well in the certificate examinations.

ASSESSMENT

A range of assessment methods are used in the art department. These include formal tests at Christmas, Easter and summer as well as continual assessment through out the year. The methods used to monitor students work are varied to maximise students' potential for self-assessment. This includes peer assessment, portfolio assessment, and oral responses during lessons. Very detailed records are kept of students' progress. This is good work.

Homework was assigned to students where it was appropriate in the lessons observed. In each case the homework was clearly explained to students to ensure that it would be successful. Homework and assessments are carefully recorded by the teacher to provide a comprehensive profile of students' progress. This information is communicated to students during class time and to their parents at parent- teacher meetings and using the students' journal. This is good work.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the main strengths identified in the evaluation:

- The art department enjoys a very high profile in the school and the subject is very well provided for and supported by school management.
- The numbers of students taking Art are very healthy.
- The art department has developed the rooms provided into very high-quality learning environments for students.

- All planning including curricular planning at the art department is student-focussed and of a very high standard.
- The art department places a very high value on the finish and display of students' completed work in the art rooms and around the school. This serves to inspire students and help them aspire to a high quality of execution.
- A most valuable range of extracurricular and co-curricular activities are provided for students to enhance their studies of Art.
- During the evaluation, the quality of teaching was very good in lessons observed.
- The quality of students' learning in all areas of the syllabuses is of a very high standard across the ability spectrum. Students' completed work is expressive, skilful, informed and aesthetically pleasing.
- The assessment methods used by the art department are supportive of learning and enable accurate tracking of students' progress.

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

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 accepts and welcomes this Report as an endorsement of the very high standards of teaching and learning offered by the two Art teachers and the recognition of the efforts of the school management to support teaching and learning. The Board wishes to record the appreciation of the teachers and the principal for the splendid manner of professional engagement by the inspector whose obvious enthusiasm and energy for the subject mirrored the commitment of the teachers to their subject. The advice and insight provided by the inspector has encouraged the teachers to further expand their horizons for the provision of Art to the pupils. The new SLR digital cameras recommended by the Inspector have been provided and are already in use.

The Board applauds the high standards of subject organisation and planning in the Art Department and views the systems and structures as a model of good practice for all subject departments. This inspection was a very positive and valuable experience for our school and we acknowledge the supportive role of the inspector in the entire process.

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