An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of ART
REPORT

Jesus and Mary Secondary School
Crossmolina, County Mayo
Roll number: 64630T

Date of inspection: 18 May 2011
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN ART

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>18 May 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>• Feedback to principal and teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interaction with students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MAIN FINDINGS

- High standards of instruction and course delivery were evident in the lessons inspected and a comprehensive approach to teaching basic skills and the art elements was evident.
- Students are motivated and engaged and levels of appropriate support and empowerment for them were impressive.
- The art department has developed a major role in school life and supports academic, social, personal and vocational development of students.
- Practical and well-documented planning supports organisation of learning experiences.
- Though one art room is very well appointed and equipped, the second is much less so, creating a different educational experience for various class groups.
- Analysis of state examination results is undertaken and this should be used to bring about changes in emphases to improve delivery for improved student outcomes.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Formal timetabling that allows all class groups access to the main art room over the course of the year is recommended.
- It is recommended that further development of the higher-order dimensions of the subject is brought about through planning, delivery and assessment.
- Though correct terminology and vocabulary was used in teaching, strategies to get students to understand, remember and use it themselves were not, and it is recommended that this is strengthened.
INTRODUCTION

Gortnor Abbey is a voluntary secondary co-educational day school serving a wide rural area and is dependant on busses because of its location outside Crossmolina. The current enrolment is 420. Formerly a boarding school, it has good accommodation and extensive grounds. The school offers an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. 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.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

• High levels of professionalism and dedication characterise the approach to planning and delivery of courses, and the nurture and support of student learning.
• The individual attention given to students allowed monitoring and assessment of individuals and groups to take place as an integral part of lessons.
• A comprehensive approach to teaching basic skills and the art elements was evident.
• Students are motivated, engaged and attaining well.
• The levels of appropriate support and empowerment for all levels were impressive.
• Teaching of fundamental skills and techniques is very effective. The challenge for developing this strength is to find strategies that allow students to develop personal and autonomous creativity and self expression; it is recommended that planning is undertaken to bring this about.
• The TY art programme has been, to date, a varied and encounter-rich package with inputs from external professional artists and designers. This approach is now being reviewed. It is suggested that a course based on the full range of crafts available for Leaving Certificate is introduced, but modulated through the principles of the TY programme.
• The art department contributes to school drama productions. Many students have first-hand contact with stage setting and costume as a result. This experience should be integrated formally into the taught senior cycle course as a design option for the Leaving Certificate examination.
• Students were on task, engaged and diligent, all of which is reflected in the quality of the artefacts archived and on display.
• Information and communication technology (ICT) was in use; art appreciation was stitched into a practical assignment and the learning environment here was rich and is commended.
• Practices in the art department and the quality of lessons delivered were impressive.
• Like the TY programme, co-curricular and extracurricular activities are an important element in the art department’s efforts to widen students’ cultural and artistic horizons. Good use was made of a visit to the Dublin Tutankhamen exhibition, later linked directly with students’ own artefact making on their return. This is very good practice.
• The art department, having established a good system of course delivery, could valuably develop strategies to allow creativity and imagination to be more strongly nurtured parallel to the technical and perceptual, and it is recommended that the higher-order self-
expressive dimensions of the subject are furthered through planning, delivery and assessment in the coming year.

- Communication is good among students and with teachers and there was a good learning atmosphere in the art department. Terminology appropriate to the technical and artistic content of the subject was used. But while vocabulary used was good, strategies to get students to understand, remember and use it were not overt, and it is recommended that this aspect of delivery be given higher importance.

**SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- The dynamic and positive input of the art department into many aspects of school life is valued and lauded by management and the school community.

- Time allocated to Art and access to it at both junior and senior cycle is good. Students of all aptitudes and motivational levels study the subject. The art department has a strongly caring profile and students with special needs and other issues are fully accommodated.

- The school has provided a range of facilities, which are well ordered, maintained and managed. The difference in the quality of the accommodation between one art room and another in terms of space, light and facilities for crafts and 3D is marked and it is recommended that, in order to ensure that the advantages for learning provided by the better art room are equitably spread over the student groups, a conscious effort is made to allow effective access of all class groups to the better room. While some access is arranged informally between the art department personnel at present, this needs to be more extensive and firmly established in habitual practice. Ideally a room which is less cramped and with better light would be a better solution to the less than adequate second room.

- Art department personnel have been supported in their continuing professional development (CPD) needs and it is recommended that this is continued in order to support them in implementing the recommendations of this report.

**PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Different personal approaches to planning apply for the different teachers but there is a joint and shared planning culture documented in a good department plan. Enrichment of this with more reference to differentiation and to appreciation of art and design at age-appropriate levels needs to be included and it is recommended that these elements are included in a phased way in the short to medium term.

- The teachers work well as a team, meet regularly informally and formally. They plan work collaboratively and share, utilise and manage materials and equipment. This effective working relationship helps to ensure that co-curricular and extracurricular activities are well devised.

- Linking contemporary art practice in Ireland and internationally through the use of ICT is a recommended further step in extending cultural awareness.

- It is recommended the art department further develop its practices to utilize ICT to aid and develop individual students’ visual interests and tastes in art, architecture and design in an age-appropriate way.
• Good records are kept of assessment results. State examination results are analysed by the principal and art teachers. It is recommended that strategies are developed on foot of such analysis to inform possible actions for improving outcomes in state examinations.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

Published January 2012