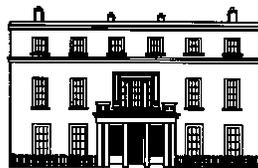


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Technical Graphics and Design
and Communication Graphics
REPORT**

St Aidan's Community College
Dublin Hill, Cork
Roll number: 71101G

Date of inspection: 9th March 2016



AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN TECHNICAL GRAPHICS AND
DESIGN AND COMMUNICATION GRAPHICS**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	8 th & 9 th March
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 and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Good quality teaching and learning was evident in all of the lessons observed with very effective practice observed in one senior cycle lesson.
- Literacy and numeracy strategies employed in the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) lesson were highly effective and well integrated into the subject specific content.
- Uptake of higher level in certificate examinations is good overall.
- There is scope for improvement in the attainment levels of students at both junior and senior cycle.
- The number of students choosing to study Design and Communication Graphics (DCG) for their Leaving Certificate programme is low and has resulted in the amalgamation of the fifth and sixth-year class groups.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- A more regular and robust assessment process should be adopted by the subject department to further inform teaching and to positively impact student attainment rates through greater use of target setting for individual students.
- An assigned portfolio-based task should be adopted to promote greater ownership of students' work and to raise their perceived standards of high quality work.
- The subject department should redouble its efforts to promote student uptake of graphics subjects and develop a strategic action plan that can be used to specify appropriate strategies and measure their success in addressing the current downward trend.
- The subject department should review the Transition Year (TY) module descriptor to ensure that design and communication are central elements of the module.

INTRODUCTION

St Aidan's Community College is a co-educational school that operates under the co-patronage of Cork Education and Training Board (ETB) and the Diocese of Cork and Ross. It has a current enrolment of 489 students. At junior cycle, students are offered the Junior Certificate and the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP). Senior cycle students, on completion of the compulsory TY programme, are offered the established Leaving Certificate and the LCA programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Good quality teaching and learning was evident in all of the lessons observed with very effective practice observed in one senior cycle lesson.
- Lessons were focussed and key learning objectives were identified and shared with students. In most instances, these objectives were revised periodically during and at the end of lessons. This good practice should be shared among all members of the subject department.
- A wide variety of effective methods was employed during the lessons observed. The primary methodology utilised in lessons involved teachers demonstrating at the blackboard or at students' desks and students modelling their practice when attempting assigned tasks or projects. This strategy was supported through good use of visuals and images and, in a few instances, informal collaboration. More structured collaborative tasks should be employed where appropriate to maximise students' learning and cognitive engagement.
- Teachers used questioning to ascertain students' knowledge and understanding throughout the lessons observed. These questions were often lower order in nature and generally students responded well. There is scope for greater use of higher order questioning strategies in order to instigate greater levels of problem solving among students and to initiate further dialogue amongst them also.
- Very good quality differentiated tasks and assessments were used in the LCA lesson observed. These strategies were highly successful and encouraged students of all abilities to participate and achieve at an appropriate level to their abilities. This lesson was very inclusive and resulted in a high quality work ethic permeating the lesson.
- Literacy and numeracy strategies employed in the LCA lesson were also highly effective. These strategies were used to reinforce subject specific learning in an unobtrusive manner that scaffolded students' subject-related learning as well as reinforcing their literacy and numeracy key skills.
- Overall student learning was good. Students exhibited appropriate skill levels and understanding of key concepts. Students' draughting skills were good and their responses to questions posed during the inspection demonstrated a sound grounding in the fundamental concepts of the subjects.
- Uptake of higher level in certificate examinations is good. There is scope however for improvement in the attainment levels of students at both junior and senior cycle. The subject department should incorporate a more regular and robust assessment system that can be used to inform teaching and positively impact student attainment rates through target setting for individual students.

- Students' work was monitored effectively during the lessons observed. Students' portfolios are also monitored but, in almost all cases, these lacked effective formative feedback on completed work. An assigned portfolio-based task should be adopted to promote greater ownership of students' work and to raise their perceived standards of high quality work.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Uptake of graphics subjects is good at junior cycle and compulsory within the schools modular TY programme. The number of students choosing to study DCG for their Leaving Certificate programme is however a matter of concern. The subject department should redouble its efforts to promote student uptake of graphics subjects and develop a strategic action plan that can be used to specify appropriate targets and strategies and to measure their success in addressing the downward trend.
- Graphics subjects are offered as optional subjects to students enrolled in all programmes with the exception of those who partake in the JSCP. Class groups are allocated appropriate time. However, school management has made the decision to combine the fifth and sixth year DCG class groups in order to ensure the ongoing viability of the subject at senior cycle. While not a long-term solution, this has resulted in continuity for DCG at senior cycle. Efforts to ensure the viability of DCG on the school's curriculum should result in standalone fifth and sixth year class groups resuming in the near future in order to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for students.
- Currently first-year students take part in a subject sampling programme. TY students are also given the opportunity to sample aspects of DCG during the modular subject sampling element of TY. These initiatives are worthwhile and help students to select their optional subjects based upon their skills, aptitudes and experience of the subjects.
- The graphics room is very well equipped and has all of the necessary audio-visual and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment to facilitate the effective teaching and learning of graphics subjects.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A subject co-ordinator has been identified and takes responsibility for maintaining the subject plan and convening subject department meetings. Records of these meeting are maintained; however, they pertain primarily to organisational matters. The subject department should now ensure that strategic issues such as increasing student uptake of graphics subjects and raising student attainment in certificate examinations are always discussed and planned for at subject meetings.
- A TY plan has been developed for the TY DCG module. This module descriptor details a module that has an emphasis on design and manufacture. The subject department should review this module descriptor to ensure that there is a greater emphasis on design and communication. By doing so, students would be guaranteed an experience in the TY module that better reflects the subject at leaving certificate level.
- The quality of teacher preparation was very good at senior cycle and satisfactory at junior cycle. Where preparation was of a high standard, students benefitted considerably and lesson activities were more varied and engaging.

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 accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wished to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The staff and school will take the recommendations into consideration when planning for DCG.

The Provision of T. Graphics/DCG as an option will be dependent on staffing levels.