

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Art**  
**REPORT**

**Loreto Secondary School**  
**Balbriggan, County Dublin**  
**Roll number: 60010P**

**Date of inspection: 11 December 2015**



**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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date(s) of inspection</b>	10 and 11 December
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was of a very high quality, with instances of exemplary practice noted in all lessons.
- The quality of student learning was very good; students displayed skills in using a variety of media and demonstrated appropriate knowledge in the application of material for set tasks.
- Students' work is assessed regularly and the quality of oral and written feedback provided to students was a significant strength.
- The art department offers a significant variety of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities to support achievement and to provide students with an enriching, well-rounded understanding of Art.
- The overall quality of provision and whole-school support for Art is very good.
- It is positive that students of Art are provided with many opportunities to assume leadership roles.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- To facilitate students to take better ownership of their learning, the art department should develop strategies to engage learners in using the formative feedback provided on both theory and practical work.
  - The role of subject department co-ordinator should be rotated, to develop capacity amongst all members of the department.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan is a voluntary Catholic secondary school with a current enrolment of 1,218 girls. The school provides Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY) and Leaving Certificate programmes. Art is an optional subject in all programmes.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was of a very high quality, with instances of exemplary practice noted in all lessons.
- Clear learning intentions were set and shared with students at the start of all lessons. This very good practice proved effective in supporting and assessing students' learning and clearly focused them on the knowledge and skills to be developed.
- Students were on task and purposefully engaged during all lesson activities. On occasion, teachers incorporated tasks that required students to work in groups and in pairs. This approach worked well in facilitating cooperative learning opportunities among students.
- In all of the lessons observed, teachers had very high expectations of their students. Teacher-student rapport was mutually respectful but was also appropriately friendly. Teachers were most affirming of students' contributions and efforts.
- The learning spaces in each specialist room were well organised and maintained to a high standard. This commendable practice is modelling good routines and is facilitating students to have a very good level of self-organisational skills in practical lessons.
- The quality of student learning was very good. Students displayed skills in using a variety of media and demonstrated appropriate knowledge in the application of material for set tasks such as puppetry construction and the production of wearable fashion garments.
- Homework is given regularly to all year groups. The introduction of a combined theory and practical homework project to junior years is indicative of good practice. The design of these homework projects has resulted in purposeful student learning.
- Students' work is assessed regularly and the quality of oral feedback provided to students was a significant strength in all of the lessons observed. This feedback provided support while maintaining the high expectation set for students.
- Good-quality constructive written formative feedback was apparent in students' copybooks and sketchbooks. In one lesson, good written directional feedback on practical work was used at the start of a lesson to enable students to set individual lesson goals. To build on this good practice, it is recommended that the art department develops further strategies to engage students in using this feedback to take better ownership of their learning.
- Very good questioning strategies were observed in all lessons. Such practice was exemplified where the teachers facilitated quality learning by assessing students' ongoing understanding of the lesson intentions through a series of skilful questions. Teachers should be mindful of allowing sufficient wait-time to answer the questions posed.
- An emphasis on the development of students' literacy skills was a feature of all the lessons observed. Students demonstrated a clear knowledge and understanding of subject-specific language whilst discussing and writing about art work. Further opportunities to develop structured oral work should be integrated into lessons.

- There was a very good emphasis on integrating relevant numeracy concepts during most of the lessons observed. The relevance of mathematical concepts such as balance and symmetry when observing portraits, and the importance of proportion when constructing clay sculptures were clearly explained and integrated into lessons.

#### **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- The overall quality of provision and whole-school support for Art is very good. Systems are in place to support the uptake of Art and option bands are constructed based on students' choice.
- The art department offers a significant variety of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities to support achievement and provide students with an enriching, well-rounded understanding of Art. Some examples include portfolio preparation, the organisation of the annual fashion show and the facilitation of a photography workshop.
- Teachers are actively engaged with ongoing continuing professional development (CPD). In discussions with the art department and management, it was evident that teachers share resources and expertise in planning for the teaching and learning of Art.
- It is positive that students of Art are provided with many opportunities to assume leadership roles. For example, during '*Mental Health Week*' students organised a series of art activities to promote awareness of positive mental health amongst the whole-school community.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The overall quality of planning and preparation was good.
- Long-term and short-term common programme plans have been developed. Detailed individual planning documentation was also presented during the evaluation. To enhance these already well-developed documents, the art department should incorporate differentiated learning outcomes and detail the numeracy concepts being developed to further support student learning.
- Good records of students' progress are maintained and archived by the teaching team. The department reported that they discuss and review planning documentation annually and update them accordingly. The decisions and actions arising from these reviews should be recorded in the minutes of planning meetings.
- Art History is embedded into all programme plans. However, the TY programme plan should be reviewed to provide further opportunities for students to engage with the History of Art in a more creative way. An idea discussed was to take inspiration from the upcoming gallery visit, at the time of the evaluation, to inform a 1916 photography project.
- A strong collaborative ethos in the approach to subject planning was evident. Subject coordination has been carried out effectively over the past number of years. It is recommended the role of subject department coordinator be rotated, to offer opportunities of leadership to all members of the department.

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

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