REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN ART

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning are very well managed and there is a creative and focussed ambience which is greatly to the advantage of the students’ attainment potential in art and design.

- Attainment is strong in design and craft. High standards were clearly evident in creative embroidery, ceramics, calligraphy and 3-D. Students’ artefacts were highly finished.

- Information and communication technology (ICT) use has allowed extensive enrichment of course delivery.

- Regular assessments take place during the school year and these support students’ learning and progression.

- A good programme of co-curricular activities extends students’ experience of art and design.

- An enhanced focus on artistic creativity and self expression would extend the considerable achievements of the art department, skilling students to further individualise their artistic thinking and practice.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that the creative and self-expressive facet of art making is amplified and extended further though planning.

- A review of the content and delivery of first-year courses is recommended to further the development of skills implicit in expressive, age-appropriate creativity.

- The aims and objectives of the junior cycle syllabus document should be focussed on in the planning process, to ensure breadth and balance.

- A strategy where art-specific vocabulary and concepts are highlighted should now be designed and implemented.
INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Naomh Muire is a voluntary secondary all-girls school under the patronage of the Sisters of Mercy, the sole girls-only school in the large conurbation of Naas. Current enrolment is 917. The school offers an optional Transition Year TY).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

• There is a very professional, effective and committed approach to the delivery of courses; this is reflected in students’ work-ethic and artefacts.

• Art-department personnel guide students through a range of learning experiences within well-defined parameters. A variety of teaching methodologies were used. Delivery of lessons created very good conditions for learning.

• Appropriately, for the end of the school year, there was an emphasis on revision, on assessing students’ attainment levels on certain topics, and on practical advice in relation to the Leaving Certificate examination. ICT and group work were integral to revision work.

• Textiles and ceramics are specialisms of the art department; teaching and learning in these and in art elements, drawing and 3-D, is excellent. There is strong attainment in design and craft; high standards were very clearly evident throughout, particularly in creative embroidery, calligraphy and 3-D; many artefacts are exceptionally well realised.

• Students’ artefacts were highly finished. The practice of students being facilitated to achieve such finish during lessons needs now to be reviewed. It is recommended that once the main work has been done, time-consuming assignments should be completed as homework, when possible, making class time available for new learning and generally freeing time up for a broadened experience of art and design.

• Very good discussion was integral to a lesson on product design. It is recommended that strategies for facilitating students to remember what is discussed are developed, such as recording the main points, to strengthen recall of these.

• ICT use has allowed extensive enrichment of course delivery. A strong point was that, though students are encouraged and facilitated to research on the internet, slavish dependence on secondary sources was not a widespread practice, and this is highly commended. Very good use of illustrated PowerPoint material was made in some of the lessons seen.

• Regular assessment takes place which supports students’ learning and progression. Student work is monitored daily during the Junior Certificate project. A variety of appropriate assessment procedures is in use: continuous assessment based on class work, regular classroom tests and end-of-term examinations. The use of self-report questionnaires, whereby students are facilitated to engage in some self assessment, that would enhance and extend the art department’s well-established good overall practice in the assessment aspect of its work is recommended.

• Teaching and learning are very well managed and there is a creative and focussed ambience which is greatly to the advantage of the students’ attainment potential in art and design.

• Craft and design are excellently covered; there is a strong emphasis on technique. The considerable achievements of the art department to date should now to be extended more
fully into developing the expressive and creative dimensions, skilling students to further individualise their artistic thinking and practice. It is recommended that strategies are devised that build on current strengths to achieve this desirable emphasis.

- Good communication and an encouraging, caring ambience pervaded all lessons. Inclusion of all students was notable and, though students worked independently and proactively, help and advice was always available; students accessed this frequently and advantageously.
- Very good questioning, correction and information giving supported the learning and revision being undertaken.
- While excellent art-specific vocabulary and technical terminology was used in lessons, it should be noted that a habitual focus on enabling students to learn, remember and utilise such verbal content is necessary. It is recommended that a strategy where vocabulary and concepts are highlighted in all classes is designed and implemented.
- In relation to numeracy, measurement, scale, proportion, weights and volumes are all part of procedures for designing and making artefacts, and are integral to practical and technical activities.

**SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Access to art is good. The timetable adequately supports the subject.
- The school has provided good facilities for art and design. Two art rooms, a kiln and crafts are available to students, as well as cameras and ICT equipment. The well-ordered, managed and maintained classrooms support the learning activities of the department very effectively, providing an efficient background to learning and teaching. The budget is adequate; materials are replenished and tools and facilities maintained as required.
- Management is aware of how the art department contributes to the holistic development of students, in the academic, self-development and vocational spheres. The effectiveness of the art department is also reflected in the number of students who have been inspired and empowered to pursue careers in art and design.
- The art department contributes discussion, advice and feedback at parent–teacher meetings annually for every year group. Outcomes of ongoing assessment are part of the progress report given.
- Co-curricular and extracurricular activities for art learning are strongly supported by management and are a feature of the learning agenda planned for students of Art.

**PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Planning documentation was good and a variety of approaches was indicated in relation to the delivery of topics and assignments. To further enrich these, it is recommended that the aims and objectives of the junior cycle syllabus document are used in the planning process to ensure breadth and balance of technical, perceptual and self-expressive learning.
- The art department is both active and reflective. Having the courage to follow insights through in practice is also a skill that the department should give attention to as pedagogic self development.
A review of the content and delivery of first-year courses is recommended to further the development of skills implicit in expressive, age-appropriate creativity which, in the long term, will enable students to advantageously encompass the breadth and balance in artefact making in fine art and design.

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 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.