

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

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

**Saint Finian's Community College**  
**Swords, County Dublin**  
**Roll number: 70120F**

**Date of inspection: 8 November 2011**



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 of inspection</b>	8 November 2011
<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 five class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was very good.
- Differentiation was successfully addressed in lessons using a variety of methodologies.
- The quality of students' written and practical work observed during lessons was very good. The observational work noted during lessons was of a very high standard.
- Led by senior management, planning in the art department is collaborative and effective and curricular planning is of a very high order.
- Assessment is appropriate, timely and student centred so as to encourage students' confidence, progress and achievement.
- Teachers are commended for developing the spaces provided into optimal learning environments for students of Art.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The use of guided and targeted questioning should be extended wherever possible.
  - It is recommended that the art department plan is updated to reflect the very good work taking place.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

St Finian's Community College has an enrolment of 335 male and 274 female students. The school participates in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The school offers the following programmes: the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), 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 with the exception of LCA where it is compulsory.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning observed during this evaluation was very good. Clear and well-considered lesson outcomes were shared with students and referred to at appropriate points during lessons to focus learning. This is very good practice.
- Higher-order and lower-order questions were used to appropriately challenge students according to ability level during lessons. The nature of the questioning was very good and focussed on the development of students' perceptions and their understanding of art as communication. Students were encouraged to develop their own evidence-based opinions which is very good practice. Targeted questions were used in the majority of cases. This very good technique should be used wherever possible.
- Some guided questioning was used in the history and appreciation of art to help students elicit information from the artefacts presented. More opportunities to challenge students in this way should be created.
- During lessons, students were encouraged to develop their own unique style and expressive personality in their practical work. This is very supportive of students' learning.
- A variety of resources was successfully used during the evaluation and the quality was of a very high standard. The resources used included written and visual handouts as well as displays of exemplars and artefacts. These helped students to remain focussed and engaged. In particular, the visual aids chosen were very appropriate to the learning objectives. Information and communications technology (ICT) was used very well to develop and display resources and information.
- Differentiation was successfully addressed in lessons in a variety of ways. Best practice was observed when a combination of specifically developed learning outcomes, teacher instructions, visual aids, handouts and tasks was used to help challenge students appropriately. This is very good work.
- A variety of methodologies was used in each lesson. Learning tasks were appropriately sequenced and were progressive in the level of challenge to help students progress. Very good introductions and conclusions to lessons helped to maintain students' focus on the lesson objectives.
- Teachers have developed a very good rapport with students. During the lessons observed, students' behaviour was good and all students were engaged and appeared to be positively disposed towards the subject.
- Students were warmly affirmed and encouraged regularly in the lessons observed. Teachers made great efforts to specifically name and describe the good work and efforts

- of students so that they could understand why they were being praised. This is a very good way of encouraging positive behaviour and increasing students' confidence.
- Teachers' monitoring of students during lessons enabled them to support independent student learning.
  - The quality of students' written and practical work observed during lessons was very good. The observational work noted during lessons was of a very high standard.
  - Students are encouraged to emphasise the finish and presentation of their work. The levels of presentation of students' work in addition to the displaying of this work serves to very effectively support the development of students' confidence in their abilities.
  - The homework assigned was supportive of the lessons experienced by students and appropriate to their needs.
  - Various assessment for learning techniques are appropriately used to support students' progress. The use of self-assessment sheets and of teacher-led peer critiques in lessons is commended.
  - Students' literacy and numeracy needs were given appropriate attention in the art department's planning for lessons. Very good strategies were used to help students in the lessons observed, for example, words were displayed with visual illustrations and key word notebooks were used.

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

- Timetabling for the subject is good and supportive of its practical nature.
- Arrangements for student access to the subject are good.
- The art department provides a very supportive range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities to support students' art education. Imminent plans to exhibit students' artwork are very worthwhile.
- It is good to note that a formal analysis of students' results is carried out to inform planning.
- Members of the art department have been provided with relevant whole-school continuous professional development. They also attend relevant events and programmes to benefit from the art-specific education supports available. This is good work.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Led by senior management, planning in the art department is collaborative and effective.
- Curricular planning is of a very high order. The inclusion of lesson outcomes, differentiation, methodologies and assessment has supported the development of very good learning experiences for students.
- After each set of lesson plans is completed, a written evaluation of the scheme takes place. This is best practice.
- There is scope to update the current art department plan to reflect the very good planning taking place.

- The school provides two well-appointed rooms for Art. The art department's overarching philosophy of making best use of the resources provided ensures that the art rooms, equipment, materials and resources are managed to their best advantage. Teachers are commended for developing these spaces into optimal learning environments for students of Art.
- Teachers' individual planning for lessons was of a very high standard and fully supportive of the needs of the students in the lessons observed.
- The art department maintains very good records of students' attendance, effort and achievement.

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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.