

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT
Firhouse Community College
Dublin 24
Roll number: 70140L

Date of inspection: 12 March 2015



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

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN TECHNICAL GRAPHICS
(TG) AND DESIGN AND COMMUNICATION GRAPHICS (DCG)**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	12-13 March 2015
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good or good with some evidence of excellent practice.
- All lessons demonstrated clear evidence of good planning and preparation.
- A very calm and respectful learning environment was evident in all lessons.
- All students demonstrated a very positive attitude to the subject.
- A very well resourced room, dedicated to senior cycle DCG, has recently been completed to support the delivery of graphics subjects.
- There was scope for development in respect to subject department planning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that all lessons plan for appropriate differentiated support with greater opportunity for discovery, discussion and problem-solving.
 - All graphics lessons should be timetabled for the graphics rooms and future timetables should ensure that the splitting of classes between teachers be discontinued and the requirement for an out-of-field teacher to teach Technical Graphics be reduced.
 - The subject department should plan for the inclusion of a formatively assessed student portfolio to support improvement in students' learning and to track students' progress.
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INTRODUCTION

Firhouse Community College is a co-educational post-primary school under the patronage of Dublin Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). It has a current enrolment of 727 students. The school provides Technical Graphics (TG) as an optional subject in its junior cycle programme and Design and Communication Graphics (DCG) as an optional subject in its Leaving Certificate programme. The subject is also included as part of the school's compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good or good and included evidence of excellent practice.
- All lessons demonstrated clear evidence of good planning and preparation. In a number of lessons, excellent resource integration aided the development of the students' visualisation and spatial reasoning skills in addition to supporting understanding.
- A very structured learning experience was evident in all lessons. Learning outcomes were shared with the students in all lessons and review of the learning outcomes typically took place during lesson closure. In one lesson, overly ambitious outcomes were set. Greater emphasis should have been placed on conceptual development in this lesson.
- Prior learning was typically reviewed at the beginning of the lesson. This was most effective when supported by open and developmental questioning which encouraged student thinking and demonstration of their conceptual understanding.
- The principal methodology employed was teacher demonstration followed by independent student activity. Students were supported in their work by teachers circulating to guide work and learning. Greater opportunity should be provided for more higher-order learning through student engagement in discovery, discussion, and problem-solving.
- A scaffolded learning experience in a very calm and respectful learning environment was evident in all lessons. Students worked very diligently. In some cases, students were capable of working at a faster pace while others required more support. It is recommended that all lessons plan for appropriate differentiated support.
- In the best lessons, due regard was paid to development of student's literacy skills. Keywords were identified at the start of all lessons and in some lessons were very well integrated and revisited throughout the lesson.
- The quality of student's work was good or very good as observed during the lessons and in students' portfolios. All students demonstrated a very positive attitude to the subject and were comfortable and confident when asking questions. Teachers were very affirming of student effort.
- There was some evidence of very good quality formative written feedback in students' portfolios. This should be adopted as common practice across the subject department. Students should also be expected to show evidence of application and implementation of the developmental feedback provided, to further support their learning.
- The homework assigned supported student learning and in one instance promoted their conceptual understanding. Students should also be encouraged to assess their work using

shared success criteria and to annotate their drawings so as to identify and describe their learning.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Support for graphics subjects is good in Firhouse Community College. TG and DCG are established as part of the school's curricular provision. A new room for senior cycle Design and Communication Graphics (DCG) has just been completed and is a welcome addition to the resourcing of the subject. Both graphics rooms are visually stimulating environments that provide teachers and students with very good facilities for teaching and learning.
- Uptake of graphics subjects in junior and senior cycle has increased in recent years and has presented demands that have led to some anomalies in the scheduling of classes and the allocation of teaching staff. The recent expansion in teaching personnel in the subject department and the addition of the new DCG room should help address the present requirement for the timetabling of one class outside the graphics room, the splitting of a class group between two teachers and the requirement for an out-of-field teacher to teach Technical Graphics.
- First and fifth-year students have free option choice and the vast majority of students who choose graphics subjects are accommodated. A graphics module is presented as an option in the schools compulsory TY programme and this supports students in their selection of DCG for Leaving Certificate. Students may choose DCG for Leaving Certificate without having studied TG. This is a very student-centred approach.
- Subject department teachers have demonstrated an active commitment to continuing professional development. This has included further studies with school financial support.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Though some good progress has been made in respect of planning for the delivery of graphics subjects, there is scope for further development.
- The subject department has demonstrated a collaborative approach to their work and a commitment to development of their subject area. This was evident in the realisation of the new DCG room after dedication of much personal time, and by the shared co-ordination of the junior and senior cycle graphics subjects. Co-ordination should ensure that there is appropriate integrated planning for both graphics subjects and that an action plan for the department is developed, implemented and evaluated.
- Most of the curricular plans developed contain a brief overview of the syllabus content to be delivered. It is recommended that the plans be augmented and re-constructed in line with the very good structure used for the TY scheme of work. The inclusion of a formatively assessed student portfolio should be considered to guide improvement in student learning and to track progress. This would complement the school's promotion of assessment for learning (AfL) practices.
- Further student feedback should be sought, including an evaluation of the TY module to inform practice and action planning in the subject. In the absence of sampling for first-year students, initiatives to increase uptake of the subject by girls should also be addressed in the subject department's action plan.

- Recent subject department meetings have included discussion of a literacy plan in the subject as part of the school's literacy strategy, and revision of the TY graphics module.
- Overall, individual teacher preparation for the lessons was very good or excellent. In some lessons it featured the integration of physical models with visual models and graphical representation to support students' visualisation and conceptual understanding.

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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report.

It is very accurate and reflects the inspection and verbal feedback.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

We are ensuring that all Graphics subjects are timetabled for Graphics Rooms.

We are reviewing lesson plans in line with recommendations.

