

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

**Subject Inspection in Art, Craft and Design**

**REPORT**

|   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Ainm na scoile /<br/>School name</b>       | Ashbourne Community School            |
| <b>Seoladh na scoile /<br/>School address</b> | Deerpark<br>Ashbourne<br>County Meath |
| <b>Uimhir rolla /<br/>Roll number</b>         | 91495T                                |

**Date of Inspection: 08-11-2017**



### **WHAT IS A SUBJECT INSPECTION?**

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

### **HOW TO READ THIS REPORT**

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Art, Craft and Design under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

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.

## SUBJECT INSPECTION

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Date(s) of inspection</b>   | 08-11-2017  |
| <b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul> |

### School context

Ashbourne Community School is a co-educational community school which operates under the joint patronage of the Louth Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) and the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The school has an enrolment of 1034 students. The school offers a range of curricular programmes to meet the needs of its students. The study of Art is optional in Junior Cycle and in the Leaving Certificate and Transition Year (TY) programmes. Art is compulsory for students studying the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good, with instances of exemplary practice noted in all lessons.
- Highly stimulating and well-organised learning environments were apparent.
- The quality of in-class assessment is very good.
- The overall quality of whole-school support and subject provision for Art is very good.
- Health and safety procedures for art lessons are well established; an aspect of health and safety regarding a piece of specialist equipment needs to be addressed.
- The quality of planning and preparation for Art is very effective.

#### Recommendations

- The art department, in collaboration with senior management, should carry out an annual health and safety risk assessment of the art rooms and, as resources permit, should plan for the provision of appropriate protection around the kiln.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good with instances of exemplary practice noted in all lessons.
- Clear learning intentions were shared with students at the start of all lessons; this practice proved effective in supporting and assessing students' learning. Students were clearly focused on the technical skills and the development of ideas to be progressed within their work.
- Students displayed very good skills in using a variety of media and demonstrated highly effective knowledge of material appropriateness for set tasks. The content and presentation of students' work in copybooks, practical work in notebooks and larger art pieces demonstrate purposeful ongoing learning.
- Highly stimulating and well-organised learning environments were apparent. Students' artwork is exhibited to very good effect in both art rooms and in designated areas around the school.
- The quality of in-class assessment is very good. 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 expectations set for each student.
- Additionally, the art department has developed an effective strategy to engage senior-cycle students in using feedback more meaningfully. Students in senior cycle record their ideas and observations during project work using a well-designed template provided by the art department. To build on this good practice, the template design should be extended to support students further in addressing the improvements needed to progress their learning. Consideration should be given to extending this practice to all year groups.
- Very successful questioning strategies were a feature of all of the lessons observed. Appropriate higher-order and lower-order questions were used to encourage students to reflect on and to show understanding of the concepts of their art work.
- A very good emphasis on literacy strategies was noted in the lessons observed. This was characterised, for example, by very good writing prompts to scaffold writing tasks appropriately and encourage effective student note-making.
- Students demonstrated very good knowledge and skills in lessons and were well able to use appropriate subject language when discussing their work. During plenary sessions, the majority of students answered confidently and demonstrated an enquiring attitude towards their own learning. In one instance, however, a few students during a group discussion did not engage in whole-class discussions. The art department should further develop methodologies to extend oral literacy tasks to encourage all learners to participate in plenary sessions.
- Differentiated instruction was used meaningfully to ensure that all students were challenged by the learning activities. Very good differentiated strategies noted were the use of one-to-one tuition, demonstrations, adapted questioning and repetition of information orally and visually. In addition, the use of highly-effective 'hint sheets' in some lessons appropriately challenged the full range of abilities within the art class.

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

- The overall quality of whole-school support and subject provision for Art is very good. Access to the subject is good and option bands are constructed based on students' choice.
- The art department displays great enthusiasm in its work and is dedicated to promoting Art within the school. Links have been developed to incorporate the visual arts into a variety of initiatives that enhance the school environment.
- Students' achievements are celebrated with specially designated awards in Art and Art History which are presented at the end of the year.
- Health and safety procedures are well established for art lessons. During the evaluation, it was noted that there was no appropriate protection around the kiln, however. School management should now plan, as resources permit, to address this concern.
- It was further noted that a risk assessment had not been formally carried out by the art department in the recent past. It is recommended that the art department, in collaboration with senior management, carry out an annual health and safety risk assessment.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The quality of planning and preparation is very effective overall. The art department holds regular meetings. Minutes of meetings are documented appropriately and include teaching and learning on the agenda. Currently, the position of coordinator is carried out by one member of the department. As a means of further strengthening capacity, rotation of co-ordination duties is recommended
- While the art department planning folder gives a very good overview of the subject, an aspect of junior-cycle and leaving-certificate programme planning needs revision. Differentiated teaching strategies should now be aligned to the tasks being completed in schemes of work and should reflect classroom practice.
- A very good TY programme has been developed which is focused on developing all students' skills. There is a good balance between historical and contemporary theory and practical work. Commendably, the programme of work is reviewed regularly and the views of students are included in this review.
- Very good reflective practice is apparent within planning documentation. It is noteworthy that the schools self-evaluation (SSE) process is used by the department in completing reviews on pedagogy and practice. One such review looked at homework and as a result changes to the provision of homework for Art were implemented.
- The art department has identified areas for further review. In light of their own findings, it is an appropriate time to advance the implementation of literacy strategies which support students for whom English is an additional language (EAL).

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

## **Appendix**

School response to the report

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

### **Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management of Ashbourne Community School welcomes the inspection of Art and the subsequent report and would like to acknowledge the main findings, including:-

- The very good quality of teaching and learning with instances of exemplary practice.
- The highly stimulating and well-organised learning environments.
- The very good quality of in-class assessment.
- The very good overall quality of whole-school support and subject provision for Art.
- The very good quality of planning.

### **Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

The Board welcomes the recommendation contained in the report and commits to its implementation.

A protective cage for the kiln has already been ordered and is due for installation in the forthcoming weeks.

The annual risk assessment of the Art Rooms will be carried out in this academic year.

## THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the of quality the school's provision of each area.

| Level               | Description   | Example of descriptive terms  |
|---------------------|---|---|
| <b>Very Good</b>    | <b>Very good</b> applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is <b>outstanding</b> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision. | Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary |
| <b>Good</b>         | <b>Good</b> applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.                             | Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement   |
| <b>Satisfactory</b> | <b>Satisfactory</b> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.   | Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas  |
| <b>Fair</b>         | <b>Fair</b> applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.   | Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve   |
| <b>Weak</b>         | <b>Weak</b> applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.  | Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;   |