

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta
Department of Education and Science**

**Subject Inspection of Art
REPORT**

**Saint Vincent's CBS
Glasnevin, Dublin 11
Roll number: 60400F**

Date of inspection: 11 April 2008

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REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN ART

SUBJECT INSPECTION REPORT

This report has been written following a subject inspection in St. Vincent's CBS. It presents the findings of an evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning in Art and makes recommendations for the further development of the teaching of this subject in the school. The evaluation was conducted over one day during which the inspector visited classrooms and observed teaching and learning. The inspector interacted with students and teachers, examined students' work, and had discussions with the teachers. The inspector reviewed school planning documentation and teachers' written preparation. Following the evaluation visit, the inspector provided oral feedback on the outcomes of the evaluation to the principal and subject teachers.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

The art room is situated upstairs in the school's gymnasium building. It is adequately spacious and has basic facilities for the delivery of art, design and crafts, as well as other related activities. The space is well organised and run. It has however, little specialist equipment or facilities and natural light is poor. Though there is specialist expertise in sculpture available in the art department these skills cannot be deployed to the full extent with students because there is no area properly laid out and equipped with sinks, kiln and adequate storage for clay and plaster work.

Three staff members deliver art courses, one of whom acts as a co-ordinator for the subject. Two staff members have a professional background other than visual art and the school relies on them to provide art lessons for some class groups. At present, the three teachers meet informally on a frequent basis and this is commended. It is recommended that, management facilitate more formal meetings of the art

department during the academic year, in order that, planning and co-ordination of work be supported in the strongest possible way.

Art lessons for students participating in the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme and for one first-year class group are held in general purpose classrooms. These rooms have not been altered or customised to support delivery of the subject, which has its own specific requirements for an optimal working and learning environment. Sometimes it is possible for the LCA or first-year classes to be held in the art room, but more usually, it is necessary for art materials or tools to be brought from the art room to wherever these class groups are held. This is a most unsatisfactory arrangement, which does nothing to expedite appropriate delivery of art, design and craft education to these class groups. If it is not possible to conduct all art classes in the proper art room, better arrangements to do so in the general purpose rooms must be made. A cupboard to contain all the required art materials and tools, and a supply of paper and card should be installed in both of the rooms involved. Students should have easy and habitual access to appropriate tools and materials when they are studying art and design as part of their timetabled curriculum. It should be noted by the board and by management, that art and design is dependant on materials and resources in a way that more information-driven school subjects are not. The budget given to the art department is relatively low. However, as Art is a popular subject with a healthy uptake, and as materials and tools are essential to support the process of learning and the acquisition of skills, it would be advantageous to support students' artistic and aesthetic development, if the budget could be increased. In the long term, as funding permits, more resources should be assigned to the art department to extend use of information and communication technology (ICT) by both students and staff. This would enhance the range of crafts currently on offer and facilitate the introduction of new ones on a phased basis.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

There was well constructed planning documentation presented during the inspection, which gave a good outline of the type and range of art and design learning activities undertaken in St. Vincent's. A further development of the current planning documents should be the inclusion of learning aims and desired student outcomes for all the planned activities. Furthermore, it is recommended that the learning outcomes be differentiated for students of high aptitude and motivation and also for those who may be very challenged by the coursework and lack motivation as a result. As the class groupings are mixed ability, some planning for differentiated learning in all class groups could usefully be integrated into the planning documentation. Information related to differentiated teaching techniques can be accessed on the NCCA website at www.ncca.ie.

Art in LCA needs to be planned in accordance with the programme guidelines. The planning should take into account the required standards to be attained, and the overall assessment targets that students must reach. More information about teaching techniques, student outcomes, and assessment criteria and procedures should be included in planning the delivery of the LCA art programme. It is recommended that, a full review of how Art in LCA is delivered to students be undertaken, and that ways to enhance the standards attained by students in their work be given more attention.

Coupling learning aims and objectives with art and design activities and media would enhance all of the planning documents viewed in the art department during the inspection. Establishing learning outcomes for students with differing aptitudes and levels of motivation should be applied to the assessment of students' work. Learning aims and student outcomes could then be made the basis for assessing students' learning during the school year. By attending to the learning-outcomes aspect when planning Art, current good approaches to course delivery will be enhanced.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Very high standards of content, presentation, language and appropriateness were seen in the delivery of the lessons observed. Class management, communication and relationship between teachers and students were impressive. The pace of the lessons was appropriate for the activities, and the aptitudinal and motivational composition of class groups. Work progressed in an orderly and efficient manner, which maximised both the use of time and opportunities for students' learning. Students clearly benefited from the instruction given and were attentive and motivated. It was clear that teachers had developed ways to keep the students interested and motivated in the assignments and activities associated with learning in art and design.

Excellent work was viewed on the day of the inspection in the teaching of history and the appreciation of art. Information and insights were communicated to the students about the artworks under discussion in a manner and of a quality rarely encountered in the second level classroom. To this was added the students' own comments and reflections, making for a lesson that was a very high quality encounter with historical material and aesthetic perception. Photocopied handouts distributed supported the lesson. The potential for the development of the teaching and learning of the history and the appreciation of art through the use of ICT equipment and resources should now be exploited in St. Vincent's. It is strongly recommended that a multimedia projector and a screen be provided for the art room, as soon as resources become available. A small library of art and design books is available to students in the art room. It is therefore recommended, that these be added to, on an ongoing basis, as they provide a good starting point for students' encounters with the cultural and aesthetic aspects of the subject. There were many reproductions of paintings and other artefacts on display in the art room, and this is good practice. It is recommended that similar materials be displayed in the room used for first-year art, as part of an effort to increase student's contacts with historical and contemporary art and design imagery.

On the evidence of students' artefacts on display and on portfolio work seen, a wide range of media and techniques are taught to students. Abstract and representational styles both featured, and expressive and observational approaches are being developed. Many students had developed good graphic competence. In order to build on these many strengths, it is recommended that further strategies be developed to help students become confident and proficient with an extended range of drawing media and implements, from first year upwards. LCA students in particular need to have opportunities to develop a range of graphic skills across different media at a level that is appropriate to their age, and to the requirements of the programme.

Although curtailed and restricted by the lack of facilities for sculpture and 3D crafts, there is good work being done nonetheless, in this area. It is important that all first-year classes would encounter various ways of completing 3D form and image making, and it is recommended that this be planned for implementation in the coming year.

ASSESSMENT

A combination of assessment procedures is in use in the art department. These include continuous assessment based on class work, and examinations. There are written examinations for the history and appreciation of art component of the Leaving Certificate programme. The students are closely observed, monitored and advised whilst working on their Junior Certificate project and Transition Year (TY) assignments. A strong consciousness of the State Examinations Commission (SEC) assessment criteria, and of the associated practical requirements informs the work of the art department. There are systematic records of students' during-term, end-of-term and end-of-year assessment and examination results. End of term and end of year results are communicated to parents and guardians. Regular parent-teacher meetings are held and the art department provides discussion, feedback and advice at these.

Learning aims and objectives should be further developed and documented as part of assessment for learning in the art department. Information on assessment for learning (AFL) is available on the NCCA website www.ncca.ie. Learning aims for lessons and assignments should be communicated to the students, and strategies for encouraging students to appraise how successful they have been in attaining these aims, in whole or in part, should be developed. Testing of these approaches in order to find a

strategy that works in the school's own context is encouraged. All these developments would support the current good practice of the art department in the area of assessment.

Homework is set and corrected: this is desirable practice, as it reinforces learning and creates continuity between classes

It is recommended too that the SEC Chief Examiners Report for LCA should be accessed at www.sec.ie as a background for the construction of assessment criteria for LCA that reflect national standards in this programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the main strengths identified in the evaluation:

- Students are encouraged to engage with art and design and to achieve in this area.
- Good delivery of the Junior and Leaving Certificate programmes supports students' attainments in art and design.
- History and the appreciation of art and design are excellently delivered.
- A holistic encounter with visual arts culture is being provided for students despite the challenges posed by less than optimum facilities provided for Art.

As a means of building on these strengths and to address areas for development, the following key recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that ICT facilities in the art room and in the classrooms used for the delivery of Art be provided as funding permits, in order that the delivery of art appreciation to junior and senior cycles and art history to Leaving Certificate can be modernised and enhanced.
- When art lessons are delivered in general purpose classrooms, it is recommended that a cupboard stocked with art equipment and materials be provided to meet students' learning needs in this subject.
- The LCA art programme needs to be constructed and delivered in a mode and a manner that adheres to national guidelines, and sets appropriate standards for attainment to which students are expected to aspire. A complete review of how LCA art is delivered is very strongly recommended.
- As art and design is very resource dependant, it is recommended that the board and management ensure that students are not disadvantaged in their artistic and aesthetic development by the provision of inadequate funding for materials and equipment from available resources.

Post-evaluation meetings were held with the teachers of Art and with the principal at the conclusion of the evaluation when the draft findings and recommendations of the evaluation were presented and discussed.

Published November 2008