An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: Visual Arts

Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Scoil Bhride
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Paulstown Kilkenny
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	18078N
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	26-04-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	13/09/2023

What is a curriculum evaluation?

Curriculum evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum (1999)* and the *Primary Language Curriculum (2019).* 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 inspectors evaluated learning and teaching in Visual Arts under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils' learning
2. Supporting pupils' learning through learner experiences and teachers' practice
3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

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 of the school 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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Child Protection</td><td>Anti-bullying</td></tr>
<tr><td>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</td><td>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013) and this policy is reviewed annually.
2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the Procedures) since the previous report to the board.
3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils.</td></tr>
</table>

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	26-04-2023
Inspection activities undertaken • Discussion with principal and teachers • Review of relevant documents • Pupil focus-group interview	• Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of pupils' work • Interaction with pupils • Feedback to principal and teachers

School context

Scoil Bhríde is a co-educational primary school in Paulstown, Co. Kilkenny, under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. The teaching staff comprised ten mainstream class teachers, four full-time special education teachers and a shared special education teacher. There were 241 pupils enrolled.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of pupils' learning in Visual Arts was good, with very high levels of pupil engagement evident.
- Learning experiences were of a good quality, and classroom experiences were complemented by the school's engagement in national and local arts initiatives.
- The overall quality of teaching was good, with some very good practice observed.
- The quality of school planning for Visual Arts was good, with some scope for further development.
- The quality of assessment was satisfactory. While the staff had identified strategies for assessment in Visual Arts, assessment consisted mainly of undocumented teacher observations.

Recommendations

- To support continuity and progression of pupils' learning in Visual Arts, the whole-school plan should clearly document the curriculum content, knowledge and skills to be taught at each class level.
- Teachers should agree whole-school assessment strategies for Visual Arts and use these to inform next steps in pupils' learning.
- Teachers should ensure that pupils' ability to describe works of art and creative processes using the language of Visual Arts is incrementally progressed across all strands of the curriculum.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

The quality of pupils' learning in Visual Arts was good, with very high levels of pupil engagement evident. These high levels of engagement during the lessons contributed to the pupils' overall sense of wellbeing. Pupils capably applied artistic skills and techniques; they had engaged in a wide variety of drawing, painting, printmaking, construction and sculpting activities. They were familiar with the use of a variety of art tools, materials and techniques. Their learning would be further enhanced through the study of a greater variety of artists, including Irish artists of renown. During the evaluation and in the group discussion, pupils spoke very positively about their learning in Visual Arts. They described their lessons as relaxing and varied; they

highlighted the opportunities provided for them to develop their creativity. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about their lessons, but many did not have the subject-specific vocabulary to describe works of art or artistic processes competently. Teachers should ensure that pupils' ability to describe works of art and creative processes using the language of Visual Arts is incrementally progressed across all strands of the curriculum.

2. Supporting pupils' learning: Learner experiences and teachers' practice

Learning experiences provided were of a good quality; classroom experiences were complemented by the school's engagement in national and local arts initiatives. Teachers facilitated the pupils in exploring and expressing their ideas across a range of two and three-dimensional media, including drawing, paint and colour, print, clay, construction, and fabric and fibre. Where very good learning experiences were observed, teachers encouraged and supported the pupils to develop, modify and refine their ideas and to choose the most appropriate materials to represent their designs. All pupils had access to a wide range of resources and were encouraged to explore and experiment with different materials. Their work was beautifully celebrated in vibrant displays throughout the school environments. Of note, creative projects like 'A Big Draw' have captured and promoted pupil voice. Pupils have benefited from sustained engagement with local artists, through 'Creative Clusters' with other schools and national arts initiatives such as BLAST and CRAFTed.

The overall quality of teaching in Visual Arts was good. Teachers fostered positive attitudes amongst pupils towards Visual Arts. There was evidence of good coverage of the strands of the visual arts curriculum in the lessons observed and the work displayed. Lessons were paced and structured appropriately, and a good range of collaborative approaches, including pair and group work, were observed. Well-structured discussion and visual stimuli were usefully employed to contextualise pupils' activity in most lessons. Good use was made of information and communication technology (ICT) as a stimulus and starting point in many lessons. In some instances, teachers could have taken greater account of pupils' prior experience of styles, techniques and artists and used this knowledge formatively to develop pupils' skills and content knowledge incrementally. Teachers should ensure that pupils' use of subject-specific visual arts language when looking and responding to art is progressively scaffolded.

A high level of collaborative practice was evident in the school, with the effective sharing of expertise and resources noted. It was highly commendable that the school culture promoted collaboration and that teachers built whole-staff capacity by sharing their expertise formally and informally. Management has welcomed the involvement of parents and the wider community in supporting the school's visual arts programme, and their input has added to the quality of pupils' learning experiences. Several artists have worked with the school as part of the artist-in-residence programme, and the school has maximised the benefit of this work by establishing clear connections with work across the curriculum and emphasising the local area.

The quality of assessment was satisfactory overall. Teachers assessed pupils' learning through undocumented teacher observation and retained some samples of work in various strands of the curriculum. There was potential to develop the use of portfolios to provide opportunities for more structured self-reflection on pupils' progression and development in Visual Arts. These portfolios should reflect pupils' creative and aesthetic development.

3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

The overall quality of whole-school planning and school self-evaluation (SSE) was good. While Visual Arts had not been addressed in the formal school self-evaluation processes, the principal and teachers have promoted a culture of innovation and creativity in teaching and learning in

this curriculum area. The overall quality of preparation for teaching and learning was good in almost all classes. To support the continuity and progression of pupils' learning in Visual Arts, the whole-school plan should clearly document the curriculum content, knowledge and skills to be taught at each class level.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

We have found the report to be fair, well balanced and accurate assessment of visual arts teaching in the school. The report goes into good detail about the efforts that have been made to promote art in the school. The report has many positive things to say about art teaching in the school while its recommendations are constructive and practical and should be possible to implement going forward.

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 main recommendation is the introduction of subject specific visual arts language in a systematic way throughout the school. Our in-school management team are looking at the best way we can implement this as an ongoing basis in our school.

The other main recommendation was the expanded use of portfolios in our school for art. Large A3 folders have been included on our booklist in each class this year so that this can be promoted.

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 quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	*Very good* 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 *outstanding* 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
Good	*Good* 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 *very good* standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	*Satisfactory* 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
Fair	*Fair* 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
Weak	*Weak* 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;