An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Technical Graphics and Design and Communication Graphics
REPORT

Scoil Mhuire Community School
Clane, County Kildare
Roll number: 91372D

Date of inspection: 17 September 2014

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN TECHNICAL GRAPHICS AND DESIGN AND COMMUNICATION GRAPHICS

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	16-17 September 2014
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal, Deputy Principal and teachers • Interaction with students	• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Overall, teaching and learning was of a consistently good standard with many examples of very good and highly effective practice observed.
- A planned and structured learning experience was evident in all lessons observed.
- Digital display media and supporting resources were used very effectively in most lessons.
- Assessment for learning (AfL) and co-operative learning strategies are being implemented to support student learning.
- Whole-school support for the provision of the subjects is good.
- Subject planning includes excellent curricular plans with scope for development identified in the strategic planning practices of the subject department.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Further development of teaching and learning strategies should be undertaken to support differentiated learning and to increase the students' role in their own learning.
- Graphics subjects should be timetabled for the dedicated graphics room, where possible.
- The subject department should undertake action planning to maximise students' expectations and to optimise student transfer from Technical Graphics to Design and Communication Graphics.

INTRODUCTION

Scoil Mhuire Community School is a co-educational post-primary school with a current enrolment of 1052 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. Graphics and Constructions Studies is also included as a module in the school's Leaving Certificate Applied programme. The subject is also included as part of the school's optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching was of a consistently good standard with many examples of very good and highly effective practice observed.

- Overall, student learning was good or very good, as demonstrated by the quality of student's portfolio work and class work.

- A very structured learning experience was evident in all lessons. Lessons were well planned to support achievement of the stated learning outcomes. These outcomes were specific and shared with students at the commencement of the lesson and revisited at the end of the lesson. This is very good practice.

- The principal methodology employed was teacher demonstration followed by independent student activity. Students were supported in their work by teacher input which included developmental questioning. In one lesson, further consideration should have been given to ensure that all students had the opportunity to access and apply the new learning.

- Very good use of visual displays and supporting resources were employed in an integrated manner during teacher demonstrations. In all instances, the digital media was used with competence and supported students' learning. In two lessons, particularly effective use was made of the solid-modelling software to support understanding of new concepts. In other lessons, worksheets were used effectively to incrementally guide student activity.

- In all lessons, prior learning was accessed in advance of new learning. In one lesson, there was scope to facilitate the students discovering and identifying more clearly the connections between the new learning and previous learning. Opportunities for students to identify and discover associations with previous co-curricular and cross-curricular learning should be maximised.

- Cooperative learning opportunities were also provided for students in one lesson. This methodology should be further developed and extended to support differentiated learning by pairing students of different abilities and students with different experience.

- Students were diligent at all times, and the general atmosphere in the lessons was calm, purposeful and mutually respectful.

- The quality of the students' responses to questioning and the standard of work produced indicated a good quality of learning with some students demonstrating a very high standard of work. There was scope to further engage students in discussing, summarising,

annotating and explaining their work to support reinforcement and assessment of student learning.

- Homework was corrected during lessons and individual formative feedback was provided in most lessons. Consistent provision of formative feedback should be undertaken to affirm quality work and guide improvement. All lessons explicitly developed key words associated with lesson content.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The allocation and scheduling of Leaving Certificate classes is very good. First-year students are allocated four periods per week. However, only three periods per week are allocated to second and third-year students. It is noted that this reduced allocation will be increased to four for the current and subsequent cohorts entering the Junior Cycle programme. This should benefit the delivery of the curricular programme.

- The graphics classroom is well resourced and provides teachers and students with a very good facility for both teaching and learning. In addition to the graphics classroom, two of the technology subject classrooms are used for the teaching of graphic subjects. Where possible, graphics classes should be timetabled in the graphics classroom to enable optimum use of subject specific resources.

- Option bands are pre-designed for first and fifth-year students. First-year students select their preferences in advance of entry to the school and students have the possibility of selecting Technical Graphics from the two available option bands. Guidance is provided by way of the annual open night for students and parents. Fifth-year option bands are designed to accommodate students availing of the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) option.

- The TY graphics module 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.

- There is an increased uptake of the subject by current first and fifth-year students. This success needs to be maintained by continued actions to promote the subject particularly amongst girls, in the absence of sampling for first-year students, and to ensure optimum transfer from Junior Cycle to Senior Cycle.

- Commendably, regular continuing professional development has been undertaken by the subject department teachers. This has included whole-school support and individual teacher initiative.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Cross-subject department meetings take place and records of meetings are maintained and shared with school management, which is very good practice. The position of the subject co-ordinator is rotated among members of the subject department.

- Meeting minutes indicate a reflective department where issues of importance to the subject have been identified and communicated to management. The performance of

students in certificate examinations is also recorded and analysed. Students typically perform very well at the level selected. It is recommended that the subject department identify strategies to maximise students' expectations.

- The subject department should undertake action planning to optimise student transfer from TG to DCG. The further development and implementation of cooperative and differentiated learning strategies should also form part of pedagogoical discussion at department meetings.

- Excellent curricular plans for TG and DCG have been developed to support teaching and learning in the classroom. The module plan for TY graphics outlines a clear progression of learning during the eleven-week module and should provide TY students with an interesting and educationally worthwhile experience.

- The subject department's plan to implement a formatively assessed portfolio component as part of the students' terminal examinations is to be encouraged and commended.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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