An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Technical Graphics & Design and Communication Graphics

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Michael's Community College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Kilmihil Co Clare
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	70860W

Date of Inspection: 14-03-2017

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

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 Design and Communication Graphics & Technical Graphics under the following headings:

1. Learning, teaching 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.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	14-03-2017
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students	• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Michael's Community College, Kilmihil, is a co-educational school operating under the auspices of Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. The school is the sole provider of post-primary education in the locality and serves a largely rural population with a current enrolment of 227 students. Programmes offered are the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the established Leaving Certificate.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching in Technical Graphics (TG) and Design and Communication Graphics (DCG) observed ranged from good to very good and a wide range of suitable teaching methodologies was in use.
- Students displayed good to very good levels of learning, with impressive rates of student participation and engagement noted in lessons.
- A blend of higher-order and lower-order questions was used to ensure that students of differing competencies were challenged at a level that was appropriate to their development.
- Feedback on students' work is given in oral form and there was some evidence of written teacher formative feedback being provided on some student drawings in portfolios.
- Subject provision and whole-school support is very good; currently there are no aspects of DCG in TY.
- The quality of planning and preparation is very high.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- All students' portfolios should be checked and formative feedback should be written on students' drawings on a more regular basis.
- School management and the subject department should work towards including aspects of DCG within the school's TY programme.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good. Teachers were very positive about TG and DCG and demonstrated their commitment to embracing areas for further improvement.
- It was evident that teachers had identified learning intentions in planning their lessons. There is a need to communicate learning intentions to students at appropriate points during each lesson, ideally at the beginning, during and at the end. This helps students assess their own learning while also giving teachers insights into areas that require further development.
- The individual learning needs of students were well recognised in the lessons observed. Work was differentiated and students displayed good levels of knowledge and understanding. The quality of learning in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good.
- Questioning was used extensively by teachers to gauge students' learning, to probe their responses and to reinforce recently-learned subject matter. Questioning, both higher-order and lower-order, was used to ensure that students of differing competencies were challenged at a level that was appropriate to their development.
- A range of effective methodologies was observed including enthusiastic teacher exposition, pair work, student project work, investigation and discovery, and practical activities. The use of these methodologies contributed to the very high-quality student engagement and participation noted.
- Information and communications technology was used effectively to support learning. As a further addition, it is suggested that the use of a visualiser to support learning in TG and DCG should be investigated.
- Feedback on students' work is given in oral form and there was some evidence of formative feedback on some drawings in portfolios. It is recommended that all students' portfolios be checked and that formative teacher feedback be written on students' drawings on a more regular basis.
- In all lessons, literacy and numeracy development were appropriately promoted. Key words were recorded on the whiteboard and students were asked to provide a definition or spelling for key words.
- A positive, affirming atmosphere was created in the lessons observed. Students were given very good levels of support and guidance which helped to create a mutually respectful classroom environment.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole-school support for TG and DCG is very good.
- First year students make their choice of optional subjects prior to entry in September, having availed of an open-night and one-day sampling programme. As is good practice, students preparing to enter fifth year are offered an open choice of optional subjects. Subject bands are then created to accommodate their choices.

- Time provision for TG and DCG is good, with class periods well distributed across the week.
- DCG is not part of the school's TY programme. School management and the subject department should work towards including aspects of DCG within TY. This would provide access for students who may not have studied TG in junior cycle.
- Commendably regular continuing professional development (CPD) has been undertaken by the subject department teachers including a post-graduate diploma in educational leadership, Masters in Education (Technology), various T4 courses and CPD on new junior cycle. This is positive and highlights the professional commitment of the teachers to their subjects and to their students.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation is very high.
- Subject planning meetings, including the other technology departments, take place regularly. Outcomes of those meetings are recorded and are shared with management. Those meetings have a commendable focus on teaching and learning and recent topics discussed include student learning styles, common assessments and catering for students with special educational needs.
- Practices with regard to record keeping and reporting are good. Students' attendance and achievements are recorded and parents are informed.
- A collaborative analysis of attainment in certificate examinations is carried out at team level. The TG and DCG teachers are encouraged to use this data to inform target setting.
- The TG and DCG department analyses and examines thoroughly the school's previous inspection reports and the recommendations are reviewed to inform future planning. Such reflective practice is commended.

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; a response was not received from the board.

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 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;