



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Subject Inspection: Visual Art and Art Report

## REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Ballymakenny College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Ballymakenny Road Drogheda
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	91573N
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	01/05/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	17/09/2024

---

# 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(s) evaluated learning and teaching in Visual Art and Art 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.

Included in this subject inspection report is a student-friendly page that provides information for the children/young people in your school about the inspection that occurred recently. It outlines for them some of the main findings and recommendations.

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.

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

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.</li><li>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li><li>3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> or <i>Bí Cineálta (2024)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.</li><li>2. The school's current anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and students.</li></ol>

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

---

# Subject inspection

<b>Date of inspection</b>	01/05/2024
<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, including a focus group</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

## School context

Ballymakenny College is a co-educational community school, under the shared patronage of the Louth and Meath Education and Training Board and Educate Together. Current student enrolment is 1004. The school provides the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the established Leaving Certificate. Art is an optional subject in most of these programmes, except TY which has two rotated modules.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- Overall, teaching and learning were of a very good quality. The plan for each lesson was openly shared with students.
- Links to developing students' literacy skills and numerical thinking were made in all of the lessons observed.
- The overall quality of assessment practices were highly effective.
- School provision and whole-school support for the subject were very good.
- The quality of planning and preparation for Art was very good overall; however possibilities for improvement exist in planning for differentiation.
- There was a clear connection between subject-department planning and the school's improvement plan.

### Recommendations

- To support all students in making improvements to their work, the art department should look at strategies that engage students in using the very good feedback being provided to them.
- While planning for differentiation was evident in a few plans, it was too general. The art department should tailor the planning for differentiation to ensure it supports the specific needs of students in art lessons.

# Detailed findings and recommendations

## 1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- Overall, teaching and learning were of a very good quality.
- The plan for each lesson was openly shared with students. It was framed within a series of well-considered learning intentions, which emphasised the active participation of students through the use of active verbs and student-friendly language. Very good practice was observed when the intended learning was revisited in lessons to fully assess students' understanding.
- The range of teaching approaches used in lessons supported the achievement of some of the literacy and numeracy targets outlined in the school improvement plan.
- In lessons observed, an emphasis was placed on supporting students' literacy such as, ensuring that students used the relevant subject language in classroom discussions. Where language was a difficulty for some students, a range of methods to support students was used, including the provision of specific explanations of key words and one-to-one support. To further support students, the department should give consideration to using the specialist rooms further and classroom displays to promote vocabulary development.
- A sample of students' copybooks and annotated work was reviewed during the evaluation. There was variation in the quality of this work. In a few of the written samples, it was evident that students regularly took notes. In order to support the department's focus on developing literacy skills, the teachers of art should explore how best they can support and develop student's skills in note making.
- Of the written samples of work reviewed, literacy skills, such as spelling and grammar and using art terminology in annotated notes, were not consistently monitored. It would prove beneficial for the department to agree strategies on how teachers will monitor literacy skills.
- Strong links with numerical thinking were made during practical learning. Such examples included the positioning and locating of objects during a photography lesson to explore perspective. Students explored pattern and were encouraged to think critically and problem solve in other lessons.
- During discussions in a focus group, students spoke positively about their experiences during visual art lessons. They highlighted the inviting environment of the specialist room and the impact its layout and displays of work had on their learning. Students noted that the specialist rooms evoked creativity and set out the expectations of the subject. Students agreed that having opportunities to look at the range of areas of practice to be studied was beneficial in developing their skills, and they enjoyed the range afforded to them.
- In most of the lessons observed, teaching and learning approaches were sufficiently differentiated; instruction was provided in these instances through one-to-one tutorials whereby teachers varied the amount and the nature of the teacher interventions given to individual students. Other approaches used included the use of differentiated resources, translated material as necessary, and recapitulation. These good practices should be consistently used, as appropriate, in all lessons.
- The overall quality of assessment practices was highly effective.
- Formal reporting of Visual Art and Art to parents through school reports indicated that a very good picture was shared with parents about how their child was progressing in the subject. The art department had incorporated the language of the grading system used in the certificate examinations when providing feedback on summative in-house assessments. This practice was commended as it allowed students become familiar with and fluent in the language of assessment.
- High quality written feedback was observed on the students' work reviewed during the evaluation. Very good oral feedback was also provided in all lessons. Examples of self and peer-assessments were observed in samples of students' work reviewed.

- While very good assessment procedures were in place, it was noted in a few instances that students were not using the feedback provided and, in these cases, feedback was often repeated by the teacher. In order to support all students to make improvements to their work, it is recommended that the art department look at strategies to engage students in using the feedback provided.
- A range of highly effective questioning strategies was used in all of the lessons observed to assess students' understanding and learning. Such examples included a very good mix of lower and higher-order questions and very good wait time from teachers, which supported opportunities for students to expand on answers themselves.

## 2. Subject provision and whole school support

- Provision and support for the subject was very good, with the desire to promote school self-evaluation (SSE) targets, key skills and student wellbeing observed as central to the work of the art department. School management was very supportive of the subject.
- Art was a well-established subject on the school's curriculum. The art department was making deliberate efforts to increase the profile of the subject among students. There was a significant increase in student uptake of junior cycle Visual Art and senior cycle Art in recent years.
- The art department was committed to the ongoing development of the subject and had participated in continuing professional development opportunities to support their work in the classroom.
- Clear health and safety procedures, including accident reporting procedures, were in operation. A number of risk assessments were completed by the art department including a risk assessment for art trips.

## 3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of planning and preparation for Art was very good overall. Possibilities for improvement existed, however, in planning for differentiation.
- The plan was based on the learning outcomes set out in subject specifications and appropriate teaching approaches to support student learning were identified. Planning for assessment was effectively aligned to planned learning intentions. Appropriately aligned wellbeing indicators were also included. It would prove beneficial for the art department to routinely audit planning documents to ensure that students experience and engage with all of the learning outcomes within the strands outlined in the curriculum specifications.
- Planning for differentiation was evident in a few of the plans reviewed, but it was too general. It is recommended that planning for differentiation should be tailored more to the specific needs of students in art lessons.
- There was a clear connection between subject-department planning and the school's improvement plan. The quality of individual teacher reflection on teaching, learning and assessment practice was a significant strength observed during the evaluation. Teacher reflections resulted in the department identifying a number of areas for its subject improvement focus and the development of an action plan. To build on this very good work, the action plan should be further developed to include a specific target for teaching and learning.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with members of the senior management team and art department at the conclusion of the evaluation.



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

For the students of Ballymakenny  
College about their learning in  
Visual Art and Art  
01/05/2024

### What kind of inspection did your school have?



Recently, an inspector called to your school to carry out a subject inspection. The inspector visited some classes and had a talk with the principal and teachers. They also met with a focus group of students who study **Visual Art and Art**. The inspector wanted to hear what the focus group of students had to say about their learning experience in that subject.

### What were the main findings of the inspection?



The inspector saw many things during the inspection. The main findings were:

- Overall teaching, learning and assessment in Art were very good.
- It was good to see that teachers helped students to develop their literacy and numeracy skills during art lessons.
- The school gave very good support to Art.

### What did the inspector recommend to make teaching and learning better in Visual Art and Art?



- Teachers should help students to make better use of the feedback given about their work.
- Teachers' planning should show how they support and challenge individual students in art lessons.

Thank you for taking the time to read this page.  
A special thank you to the students who participated in the focus  
group.

## 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	Examples of descriptive terms
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Provision that is excellent</b> is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
<b>Very good</b>	<b>Provision that is very good</b> is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
<b>Good</b>	<b>Provision that is good</b> is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
<b>Requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b> is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
<b>Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b> is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective