



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Curriculum Evaluation: Visual Arts

## Report

### REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Scoil Bhríde
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Nurney Co. Kildare
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	16345A
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	15/01/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	26/03/2025

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# 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 outcomes
2. Supporting pupils' learning through learning 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.

Included in this curriculum evaluation 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 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

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 pupils.</li></ol>

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

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# Curriculum evaluation

<b>Date of inspection</b>	14/01/2025 - 15/01/2025
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Pupil focus-group interview</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

## School context

Scoil Bhríde National School is a rural co-educational primary school in Nurney, Co.Kildare. It is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. At the time of the evaluation, the school had an administrative principal, seven mainstream teachers, two support teachers and one support teacher who was based in another school. There were 188 pupils enrolled in the school.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The quality of pupils' learning was good and pupils had a very positive attitude to Visual Arts.
- Learner experiences were of good quality and pupils engaged purposefully in individual and collaborative learning activities.
- The quality of teaching was commendable overall, with some highly effective practice observed.
- The quality of whole-school planning was good.

### Recommendations

- To ensure that pupils have the language to describe their own creative processes and other works of art, teachers should ensure that the specific language of Visual Arts is progressed incrementally across the school.
- To further enhance pupils' learning in Visual Arts, teachers should ensure greater use of digital technologies to explore and create art while also supporting the study of the work of a broader range of artists, including Irish artists of renown.
- To support continuity and progression of pupils' learning, teachers should agree whole-school assessment strategies for Visual Arts and use the information gathered to inform next steps in pupils' learning.

## Detailed findings and recommendations

### 1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

The overall quality of pupils' learning in Visual Arts was good. Pupils had a very positive attitude towards Visual Arts and they demonstrated high levels of interest in their learning. They were familiar with the use of a variety of art tools and materials. They capably applied artistic skills and techniques and in most settings, they had opportunities to design in a structured, imaginative and creative way. They engaged in a variety of drawing, painting, colour, construction, fabric, fibre activities, and they could differentiate between variations in colour and tone and recognise harmonious and complementary colours. They experimented with warm and cool colours and explored the effects of paint and colour in activities completed. Where very

effective construction lessons were observed, pupils had freedom to choose from a range of materials and they planned and used these materials to make structures. Work in fabric and fibre afforded pupils opportunities to stitch and to develop awareness of colour, texture and pattern.

When discussing their artworks, pupils did not have the subject-specific language required to describe their artistic processes with competence. Teachers should ensure that pupils are taught the vocabulary required to describe the visual elements and that they are provided with regular opportunities to use this terminology in discussing the visual arts. Displays of subject-specific vocabulary would serve as a support to pupils in consolidating and communicating their learning and in helping to ensure that their use of this language is developed incrementally from class to class, across all strands of the curriculum.

During the focus-group discussion, pupils agreed that they enjoyed their lessons in Visual Arts and spoke with enthusiasm about creating pieces of artwork. They said they especially liked working collaboratively and expressing themselves creatively. All pupils expressed a strong desire to use digital technologies and to engage more in the strands of *Clay*, *Fabric and fibre*, and *Construction* as part of the Visual Arts curriculum.

Overall, there was scope for teachers to provide a better balance for pupils between making art and looking at and responding to art. Interactions with pupils across the school demonstrated that their knowledge of the work of artists had scope for improvement. To this end, pupils' learning would be further enhanced through the study of a broader range of artists, including Irish artists of renown. Furthermore, pupils should make greater use of digital technologies as a learning tool to explore art virtually. They should be encouraged to use relevant language to look at and respond to their own art, the art of their peers and art of renown. This will further enable them to make connections between the work of other artists and their own work.

## 2. Supporting pupils' learning outcomes through learning experiences and teachers' practice

The quality of learner experiences was good. Pupils related very well to each other and to their teachers, demonstrating positive, respectful relationships conducive to supporting learning and wellbeing. They responded positively to stimuli such as poetry, story and video. In some settings, there was an over-emphasis on teacher-directed learning with insufficient emphasis on pupil expression and creativity. Where learner experiences were most effective, pupils were enabled to explore and experiment in an open-ended manner and were supported by the teacher in developing, modifying and refining their ideas. Pupils' experiences were complemented by the school's engagement with local arts initiatives.

The quality of teachers' practice was good with some very good practice also observed. There was evidence of good coverage of the strands of the Visual Arts curriculum in the lessons observed. All teachers shared learning intentions at the beginning of the lesson and lessons were well paced and structured. In all settings observed, teachers supported pupils in making authentic links between their learning in Visual Arts and other subject areas. However, when integrating Visual Arts with other subject areas, teachers should ensure that Visual Art objectives, including the development of skills and techniques of the lesson, are clearly in focus and achieved during the lesson.

Teachers enabled pupils to work both independently and collaboratively. Most teachers used effective questioning to elicit meaningful pupil response and this should be a consistent feature of all teachers' practice. Overall, assessment of pupils' learning in the Visual Arts required improvement. Most teachers assessed learning through informal undocumented observation and they retained limited samples of pupils' work across a small number of strands. Whole-school approaches to assessment should be agreed upon and adopted to guide and inform both individual and collective teaching practices. These should include maintaining clear, concise, and easily interpretable records of pupils' progress. Management and teachers should consider the introduction of art portfolios, in either digital or hard copy format, to enable pupils to reflect on their progress and to document each pupil's artistic journey as they move from class to class.

Commendably the school had developed a culture of collaborative practice, and teachers who engaged in professional development had shared their learning and expertise with other staff members.

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

The quality of school planning for Visual Arts, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning was good. A review of the Visual Arts curricular area had been prioritised as part of school improvement planning and the revised plan was used to inform teachers' planning. It provided good guidance on teaching approaches and methodologies and had potential to impact positively on the delivery of the Visual Arts curriculum. As part of ongoing action planning, the whole-school plan should include a focus on subject-specific language, the use of digital technologies and assessment practices, including how pupils' learning should be progressed, as they move from class to class. This will support the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum in Visual Arts.



### **Introduction**

Your school had an inspection of Visual Arts recently. This page for pupils describes what the inspectors found and gives ideas about what the school should do to make learning better.



### **Meeting with pupils**

The inspectors visited classrooms and talked to teachers and pupils about the work they were doing. Inspectors also met with a focus group of pupils to talk to them about their learning.



### **What did the inspectors find?**

Here are some of the main things:

- Pupils' learning in Visual Arts was good. Pupils had very positive attitudes to Visual Arts.
- Teachers helped pupils to design in imaginative and creative ways and they provided a good range of art tools and materials for pupils to use.
- Pupils said they would like to start using digital technologies to help with their learning in Visual Arts.



### **What the inspectors said the school should do to make learning better**

- Teachers should give pupils more opportunities to learn words needed to speak about their learning in Visual Arts.
- Pupils should be helped to learn more about famous artists, especially celebrated Irish artists.
- Teachers should agree different ways to record all the skills, techniques and designs pupils are practising and improving in the Visual Arts.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this page.**  
**A special thank you to pupils who took part 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

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**



## **Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

Prior to this report, the board of management had identified the teaching and learning of Visual Arts as area of improvement in its ongoing programme of self-evaluation, planning, and improvement. The board will now use this report to set SMART targets for the teaching and learning of visual arts as part of its overall school improvement plan.

## **Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

- To ensure that pupils have the language to describe their own creative processes and other works of art, teachers, with immediate effect, will ensure that the specific language of Visual Arts is progressed incrementally across the school. To help achieve this, the specific language of Visual Arts will be displayed prominently in each classroom as a visual aid. In addition, every class, each month, will do a standalone specific art lesson which is not integrated with other subjects. At the outset of this lesson teachers will say to pupils “we are now going to do a visual arts lesson”. This lesson will also benefit from being part of a whole school plan where the whole school will do the same strand per month.
- To further enhance pupils’ learning in Visual Arts, teachers, with immediate effect, will ensure greater use of digital technologies to explore and create art while also supporting the study of the work of a broader range of artists, including Irish artists of renown. To help achieve this, the digital devices we have will be used by pupils to look up artists, patterns and designs. In addition, as a whole school we will study one Irish artist and one international artist per month with our pupils.
- To support continuity and progression of pupils’ learning, the school has invested in the E-Portfolio application ‘Aladdin Frame’ as part of our new whole-school assessment strategy for Visual Arts. Teachers with immediate effect, will use the information gathered in this E-portfolio application to inform next steps in pupils’ learning.