

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Music

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Ard Scoil na nDéise
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Convent Row, Dungarvan Co. Waterford
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	64900W

Date of Inspection: 08-03-2019



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agus Scileanna**
Department of
Education and Skills

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 Music 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.

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.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

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.

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

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date of inspection	08-03-2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 3 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Ard Scoil na nDéise is an all-girls voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of Catholic Education an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). The school has a current enrolment of 357 students. In addition to the Junior Cycle programme and the Leaving Certificate (Established), the school offers an optional Transition Year programme (TY).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- A very good quality of teaching, learning, and assessment was observed in the lessons visited.
- Student engagement was very high, and students demonstrated positive attitudes towards Music.
- The quality of subject provision and whole school support is very good. Music has a high profile in the school, is available to all students, and is very well supported by senior management.
- The music department is very well-resourced and equipped with an extensive range of musical instruments and information and communications technology (ICT); heavy desks in the music room restrict an efficient, flexible learning space.
- While subject planning is good, it mainly outlines in general terms the content to be covered with each year group and lacks specificity in relation to use of teaching approaches, resources, assessment approaches, and review mechanisms.

Recommendations

- Some lightweight furniture to allow for different layouts to be set up efficiently to suit a range of music learning and performing activities as they arise, should be acquired.
- Short-term schemes of work should be included in the subject plan with a view to outlining more detail on content and use of methodologies, resources and assessment approaches. Planning for the implementation of the new specification for junior cycle Music should be prioritised in this regard.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- A very good quality of teaching, learning, and assessment was observed. Lessons were very well-prepared and structured, were pitched and paced appropriately, and included teaching that was supportive of all students.
- High expectations, coupled with stimulating and enthusiastic teaching, provided an effective environment conducive to learning.
- Student engagement was very high, and students demonstrated positive attitudes towards Music.
- The effective use of strategies such as sharing clear learning intentions with the students at the outset of a lesson and a consolidation of learning towards the end of the lesson was noteworthy.
- Very good questioning, including higher order questions, which mostly ascertained the level of student retention in terms of the more cognitive areas of musical understanding, was also observed.
- Skilful explaining strategies were also used to engage students in the learning activity, to check understanding, and to support students in the development of higher-order thinking skills.
- The fact that there was a musical focus at all times and that the students were engaged in practical music-making activities were notable features of practice observed during the evaluation. Student performing was of a very good standard, contributed to the collaborative learning environment evident in the classroom, and ensured that students achieved successful outcomes. The repertoire chosen was suitable for the age levels and the resources chosen contributed to the quality of learning. In general, these performances of the music provided convincing evidence that most students are capable of maintaining their own part in group music making. This, in turn, contributes to their development as confident, competent performers. It was good to also note the ongoing monitoring of student progress in every lesson visited.
- Strategies linking aspects of the curriculum were utilised to very good effect with the areas of performing, composing and listening integrated in a musically-focussed way. Methods such as the skilful use of the 'sound before symbol' approach and cross-referencing with other parameters of music also helped to integrate these three curricular areas. Examples of other appropriate music methodological practice and very good and effective use of the available resources, including ICT, were also observed. This resulted in a very high level of student engagement which was further supported through appropriate encouragement and guidance from the teacher.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of subject provision and whole school support is very good with management being extremely supportive in this regard. Access to the subject is very good and all students study Music as part of the TY programme.

- Timetable provision for Music is in line with syllabus guidelines. There is an appropriate spread of class contact time throughout the week, along with a sufficient number of double periods in all year groups to facilitate practical work.
- The music department is very well-resourced and equipped with an extensive range of musical instruments and information and communications technology (ICT). The relatively spacious classroom allows for a flexible learning environment but the heavy desks restrict the ease with which reconfigurations of the space can be undertaken. Replacing these desks with stackable lightweight tables would improve the situation hugely and open up more opportunities for a range of music learning and performing settings.
- The music teacher has availed of many opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) and is an active member of the Post-Primary Music Teachers' Association. Management supports and encourages teachers to regularly engage with CPD in order to develop their own practice and keep up to date with current methodologies.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The planning and preparation undertaken in the department is good overall. Subject planning documentation was presented during the evaluation and showed evidence of effective planning by the teacher.
- This documentation outlines in general terms the content to be covered with each year group. This content was relevant to the syllabus and the requirements of the examinations, and included cross-curricular planning, and homework and assessment procedures, as well as analyses of the certificate examinations and planning for the development and maintenance of resources. However, the subject plan lacks specificity in relation to teaching approaches, resources, assessment approaches and review mechanisms.
- It is recommended that short-term schemes of work be included in the subject plan. These schemes should outline, in an integrated manner, a more detailed breakdown of the content to be covered, the corresponding learning outcomes to be achieved, the resources and methodologies employed to support the teaching of topics, and the revision and assessment modes to be used by the teacher. It would also be important to build into the planning, aspects that take account of student ability. Planning for the implementation of the new specification for junior cycle Music should be prioritised in this regard.
- In addition, the inclusion of a section for evaluation and review is recommended. This will provide a useful guide for future planning in the subject. It should be noted that ICT could help hugely in this regard as moving towards electronic planning documentation would ensure the provision of a flexible working document open to review.
- However, as this is a single-teacher department, it is important to ensure that these recommendations are prioritised and undertaken within realistic and reasonable timeframes.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teacher at the conclusion of the evaluation.

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 of 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 <i>very good</i> 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;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management acknowledges receipt of the report and notes the recommendations. The areas addressed in this report will continue to form part of the subject department planning process.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

1. Tables in the music room are to be replaced with lightweight, stackable tables to facilitate easier reconfiguration of seating arrangements.
2. Work is underway on revising the structure of the subject department plan to show shorter term schemes of work and greater detail in the recommended areas.