

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection in Music**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Ó Fiaich College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Dublin Road Dundalk Co. Louth
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	71770D

**Date of Inspection: 16-10-2019**



---

**An Roinn Oideachais  
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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

## **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

<b>Date of inspection</b>	16-10-2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and music teacher</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during 3 lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and music teacher</li></ul>

### School context

Ó Fiaich College operates under the management of the Louth Meath Education and Training Board and comprises a post-primary school and an Institute of Further Education that provides Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses. The co-educational post-primary school has a current enrolment of 324 students. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan for educational inclusion and offers the full range of curricular programmes including an optional Transition Year (TY).

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good overall but some satisfactory practices were evident regarding the level of content planning and variety of teaching and learning strategies.
- Good efforts were made to integrate some of the components of Music but students did not always receive the optimal musical experience when engaging with composition.
- A very good teacher-student rapport was evident in the lessons observed and classroom management was generally good.
- Digital learning technologies were used effectively in lessons.
- Support for Music is good and the profile of Music is developing well.
- The quality of planning is good and much time and effort is being spent developing high quality resources.

#### Recommendations

- The music department should ensure that there is an appropriate level and variety of content and teaching and learning strategies in all lessons.
- In addition to the integration of performing skills, students should also experience composition through the development of their rhythmical and listening skills, where appropriate.
- As music is embedded in senior cycle, the good planning practices evident in junior cycle should be adopted and implemented in senior cycle.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Three lessons were observed across junior and senior cycle. The quality of teaching in these lessons was generally good with some satisfactory practices observed.
- The quality of learning was generally effective. Learner outcomes and experiences were good as students were able to demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge and practical skills as befitting the mixed ability setting.
- Students were seen to be autonomous learners and asked questions confidently of their teacher.
- All lessons were delivered in line with the planned programme of work. Good efforts were made to motivate students and their engagement in lessons was generally good. All lessons contained clear learning intentions but it would be useful if students were made more aware of what was expected of them in terms of the knowledge and skills that are being developed.
- In most lessons, there was an appropriate level of content planning in conjunction with a good range of teaching and learning strategies. As a result, a broad range of skills and knowledge was developed. Good practice was seen when instrumental skills were developed and integrated into some composing activities. This enabled students to further develop their knowledge and understanding of these disciplines. The development of students' rhythmical skills will further enhance this provision.
- In one lesson, which was eighty minutes in duration, content planning was confined to composition. This discipline was taught as a technical, theoretical exercise for an extensive period of time. It is important that students are provided with a musical experience of composition and that the 'Sound before Symbol' approach be a core component of this. Where appropriate, composition should also be linked to listening activities. In addition, care should be taken to ensure that all lessons contain varied content.
- Creativity and risk taking by the teacher were important components of some lessons. For instance, orchestral instruments were used by the teacher to reinforce students' knowledge and understanding of instruments. It was very courageous that the teacher performed on instruments that were not her speciality to demonstrate how they might be played as well as affording students the same opportunity. The quality of learning was good and students' enjoyment was evident.
- A very good teacher-student rapport was evident in the lessons observed. Interactions between students and the teacher were very positive and respectful at all times.
- Classroom management was generally good. Students' interest in learning was palpable which is commendable. During some lessons, one-to-one support was provided which as a strategy is suitable. However, on occasion, the remaining students became distracted. It is important that the level of one-to-one support being provided is appropriate and that tasks provided to the remaining students are designed to sustain their attention.
- Digital learning technology was used very effectively in all lessons.
- It is good that the music teacher is spending considerable time developing resources that are designed to cater for the range of students' needs. This includes games and quizzes designed to reinforce students' learning.

- Assessment practices in use by the music department are effective and support students' development and progression.

## **2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Music is a recent addition to the school curriculum since September 2018. It is currently available to students as an examination subject in junior cycle and as a non-examination, optional subject in senior cycle. The school intends to develop Music so that it is a formal component of the senior cycle curriculum. Uptake for the subject to date is very good.
- Music is well resourced and there is a designated room available for the delivery of all music lessons.
- Students are well supported when selecting their optional subjects. An information evening is provided to parents of all incoming first year and fifth-year students. First-year students sample all subjects for a two week period. The school is flexible and permits these students to change options until October. Timetabling for Music is appropriate and is in line with syllabus recommendations.
- The music department comprises a recently appointed subject specialist. There is good commitment to continuing professional development. The teacher is a member of the Post-Primary Music Teachers' Association and has attended all in-service provided by the Junior Cycle for Teachers.
- The music teacher is a member of a local cluster group of music teachers within LMETB and collaborates with a music department from a neighbouring school. This attention to collaboration is good. To enhance assessment procedures, such meetings might now include the sharing of student work which will be a helpful support to the music teacher in preparation for future subject learning and review meetings.
- It is very good that the teacher has acted as a practical examiner for certificate examinations. This experience will be useful when preparing her own students for certificate examinations.
- The music department displays very strong commitment to the development of Music in the school and this is commended. A variety of extracurricular activities is available to all students. The annual school musical is now a significant feature of the school's calendar of events.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The quality of planning and preparation for lessons was generally good.
- Planning practices are inclusive of students with special educational needs.
- A detailed music plan has been developed and good progress is evident. In junior cycle, there is a growing understanding of the rationale and requirements of the junior cycle framework and music specification. Units of learning are being developed and take into account the need to integrate the different components of Music.
- Planning for senior cycle is essentially content driven and requires more development as Music becomes embedded into the school curriculum.
- The music department has adopted effective reflective practices and this is very good.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and music 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
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;