

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Music

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Declan's Community College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Kilmacthomas Co Waterford
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	72230W

Date of Inspection: 26-04-2018



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agus Scileanna
Department of
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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.

CHILD PROTECTION

IMIS data for reference	SURE	Comment
Child Protection Outcomes	Fully compliant with the checks undertaken at the time of the inspection visit	

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	26-04-2018
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 three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

St. Declan's Community College is a co-educational post-primary school under the trusteeship of the Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board. The school has a current enrolment of 663 students. The programmes provided are the Junior Cycle Programme, Junior Certificate School Programme, a compulsory Transition Year programme (TY), Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning in Music was very good in the lessons visited.
- There was a high level of student engagement with a focus on a wide range of music-making activities.
- Resources were used effectively but the potential of a visualiser could be explored.
- Access to the subject is very good and the department is very-well resourced, although space is at a premium.
- While subject department planning is good, it mainly outlines in general terms the content to be covered with each year group.

Recommendations

- Ways in which a visualiser could be used to increase the learning opportunities for students should be explored.
- Short-term schemes of work should be developed in the subject plan and include a focus on the suggested aspects outlined in this report.
- All programmes and schemes of work should become flexible working documents that include procedures for regular review and evaluation.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in the lessons visited. All lessons observed were characterised by a warm classroom atmosphere with very good interpersonal relations between the teachers and the students, and with exemplary student behaviour. These lessons were very well-prepared and structured, were pitched and paced appropriately and included teaching that was supportive of all students.
- A very good level of student engagement was seen in lessons, with a firm focus on music-making activities. The students were attentive, interested, and enthusiastic and participated very well in the learning process. Students' contributions to class discussions were valued, with praise used effectively to acknowledge their efforts.
- All lessons observed had an aural focus and included performing opportunities. The repertoire chosen for performance was suitable for the age levels while the approaches chosen contributed to the quality of learning. This focus on building the role of Music and giving students the opportunity to take part in and enjoy practical music-making is entirely appropriate.
- Methods that made use of the students' expertise and particular talents and embedded these in the learning process, allowing the teacher to be more of a facilitator and enabler, were notably successful.
- Strategic use of assessment for learning (AfL) practices to inform students' learning was evident in some lessons. The use of strategies such as sharing clear intended learning initiatives with the students at the outset of a lesson and a consolidation of learning towards the end of the lesson was noteworthy.
- The teacher circulated to ascertain students' understanding and good questioning was employed as a means of clarification, explanation and encouragement.
- A collaborative learning environment allowing constructive and productive peer interaction and purposeful group work was observed, where the teacher guided students through various stages and facilitated a stimulating and challenging music-learning environment.
- In spite of the cramped conditions, the resources available in the music room are used to very good effect and contribute to an effective learning environment. It is recommended however, that ways in which a visualiser could be used in a music-teaching setting be explored, as it would greatly enhance learning.
- Whilst acknowledging that some examples of the '*sound before symbol*' approach were seen during the evaluation, this approach should be consistently utilised to allow students experience a more meaningful exploration of the parameters of music. This would ensure that opportunities to reinforce musical concepts and encouraging students to think musically are never wasted.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- School management is extremely supportive with regard to provision and whole-school support for the subject. Access to the subject is very good and all students study Music as part of the TY programme. It is very positive to note that even if a student has not studied Music for the Junior Cycle this is no barrier to taking it up for the Leaving Certificate.

- 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). However, accommodation is very cramped. While the teacher has given considerable thought to maximising the available space in the room to allow for as fluid a learning environment as possible, opportunities are still limited due to the restricted space available.
- The music teacher has availed of many opportunities for continuing professional development and is a member of the Post-Primary Music Teachers' Association.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject planning documentation, which was of good quality, was presented during the evaluation and showed evidence of effective planning by the teacher
- This plan 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.
- 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 in to the planning, aspects that take account of student ability.
- 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.
- However, as this is a single-teacher department, it would be important to ensure that these recommendations be 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 board of management 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.

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

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school is very happy with the findings in this report and we have set out to address and implement the three main recommendations made. We see the inspection process as a great support to the school. It is good to examine what we are doing and the recommendations made are helpful. We are delighted that the quality of teaching and learning was acknowledged and that the behaviour and engagement of students was very good. It was noted that good questioning was employed. Questioning is an area we are focusing on for SSE.

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

The principal consulted with the IT coordinator very soon after the draft report was published and he is to research the price and installation of a visualiser for the music room.

Accommodation being very cramped is a problem throughout the school. The school made a building application in 2015, which included a request for a Music Room. Following a difficult few months with waiting lists and appeals, WWETB is currently negotiating with the DES on an extension for the school, which we hope will commence in the 2018/2019 academic year.

The music teacher is very happy to take on board the recommendations to include short-term schemes of work in the subject plan and will incorporate this in the new plan, which is being developed for the new junior cycle curriculum. While the department is a single teacher department, the music teacher does avail of opportunities for CPD and takes every opportunity to collaborate with colleagues in other schools in WWETB, including being a member of the WWETB Music Teachers Community of Practice. This participation led to excellent participation by our students in the WWETB In-Harmony Concert held in the National Opera House in Wexford earlier this year to a packed house. This has also been done recently during cluster days for junior cycle music and through participation in Music Generation, which is co-funded by WWETB.