

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Music

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Athboy Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Athboy Co Meath
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91517D

Date of Inspection: 08-05-2019



**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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

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

Dates of inspection	08-05-2019
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 three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Athboy Community School is a co-educational, post-primary school under the auspices of Louth Meath Education and Training Board and the Bishop of Meath. It caters for 584 students. The school offers the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Applied programme and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Music is mandatory within the TY programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The teaching observed was effective overall but in some instances an over-emphasis on teacher input contributed to student passivity.
- The quality of students' learning was good in the lessons observed and students were able to apply their learning in different contexts.
- Very good assessment strategies are in use by the music department.
- Provision and support for Music is very good and timetabling arrangements for Music are appropriate with the exception of provision for fifth-year students.
- The quality of planning and preparation in the music department is good overall although the music plan contains insufficient information in some areas.

Recommendations

- Further opportunities should be given to students to engage actively in lessons so that there is a more appropriate balance between teacher and student input.
- The school should ensure that the timetabling deficits for fifth-year students are addressed for the next academic year.
- The music plan should be developed to include a more comprehensive record of the curriculum programmes being delivered and, over time, the units of learning being provided to junior cycle students.

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 effective overall.
- All lessons were effectively planned and were consistent with the planned programme of work for the year. Some good use was made of additional resources to enhance students' learning experiences.
- A very good teacher-student rapport was evident in all lessons. It was good to see that students' responses were listened to with respect. Occasionally, time was given to students to reconsider their response if it was not at the required standard. This is good practice and one that could be further developed.
- Effective teaching approaches were evident when opportunities were provided for students to demonstrate their practical skills or to work collaboratively on tasks. This resulted in lessons that were stimulating where students were seen to be autonomous learners.
- During some lessons, students were passive for inappropriate periods. Notwithstanding the time of year and the necessary emphasis on examination preparation, there was some scope to increase the level of student activity during lessons so as to ensure a more appropriate balance between teacher and student input.
- Composing activities occurred during some classes visited whereby students completed examination-based questions. All students engaged diligently with the task. However, no opportunity was afforded to them to perform or listen to their compositions to help them decide whether further adjustments were necessary. To enhance students' creativity and originality during composing activities, where possible, opportunities should be afforded to them to perform or listen to their compositions.
- In all lessons observed, the music teacher possessed very good subject knowledge and drew upon it authoritatively. Students were provided with very good levels of support as they prepared for the summer and certificate examinations.
- The quality of students' learning was good in the lessons observed. When questioned, students could draw on knowledge and apply it to different contexts. In some cases, they demonstrated the ability to think critically and to draw comparisons between different styles of Music. In accordance with good practice, music literacy was seamlessly reinforced and terminology was used frequently by students in lessons.
- Very good assessment strategies are being used by the music teacher. Students' work is regularly marked and, from time to time, constructive and encouraging comments are documented which focus on progress and improvement. Oral feedback is also provided to students and it would be valuable if they were required to record this feedback themselves. In so doing, this would further encourage learners to assume responsibility for their own progress and development.
- Overall, outcomes for students in certificate examinations are generally good.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole-school support for Music is very good overall.

- Music is well resourced and a large classroom is available for the delivery of all music lessons.
- Timetabling for Music is generally good and in line with syllabus recommendations with the exception of timetabling arrangements for fifth-year students where there is a shortfall in the tuition time provided. The school should ensure that these students are provided with appropriate timetabled hours in the forthcoming academic year.
- Students are provided with very good supports when making their subject choices. Information evenings are provided for parents of students entering senior cycle. First-year students experience a short sampling programme prior to making final decisions at Christmas.
- The music department displays commitment and dedication to the development of the subject in the school. For instance, a good range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities is in place to extend and enrich the students' experience of Music. These include the annual school musical, liturgical ceremonies, graduation ceremonies, concerts and a talent show. The music teacher has also attended a number of conferences and workshops.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation in the music department is good overall. A wide and varied programme is provided to students in junior and senior cycles. Many materials and resources have been created and tailored to suit the needs of the students.
- In first year, the music plan has been developed to include some of the practices required by curriculum reform at junior cycle. The plan shows some evidence of a growing understanding of the music specification. However, the units of learning are significantly underdeveloped and require further attention.
- Much of the subject plan for Music is broad and contains some detail regarding specific content being taught. There is a need to develop this plan further, so that there is a more comprehensive description of the music programme being delivered and the manner in which the different components of Music are being integrated. This will also ensure that the good practices that are taking place in lessons are being recorded.
- Records of assessments are being maintained and Music is reported on formally to parents.

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

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school welcomes this report which recognises the good quality of teaching and learning in the area of Music and overall support for the subject in the school.

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

The timetabling deficit for Fifth Year students (which arose from the decision to accommodate students who wished to take up Music after the start of the school year) has now been addressed in Sixth Year.

The Subject Plan is now being updated to include more details of the curriculum programmes being delivered.

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;