

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Music
REPORT

St Patrick's College
Cavan
Roll number: 61060M

Date of inspection: 29 January 2014



A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN MUSIC**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	29 January 2014
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teacher• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during two single and one double class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- High quality teaching and learning was evident in all lessons where many excellent practices were observed.
- Students' initiative and creativity were skilfully developed in lessons and meticulous attention was also paid to the development of practical, aural and composing skills.
- The three components of Music, listening, composing and performing, were successfully integrated into all lessons and the 'Sound before Symbol' approach was a core feature.
- Students' progress and competence is monitored and assessed very effectively by a range of assessment modes.
- Management is very supportive of Music and this is evident, for example, by the resources and facilities that are available for the delivery of the subject.
- High quality planning and preparation were observed throughout the course of the evaluation.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a need to ensure that students' folders are monitored from time-to-time.
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INTRODUCTION

St Patrick's College, Cavan is an all-boys secondary school and caters for 561 students. The school offers Music as an optional subject within the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate programmes. It is a mandatory component of the Transition Year (TY) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- High quality teaching and learning was evident in all lessons where many excellent practices were observed. All lessons were characterised by a warm classroom atmosphere with very good interpersonal relations between teacher and students. High expectations, coupled with stimulating and enthusiastic teaching, provided an effective environment conducive to learning.
- Learning outcomes were clearly communicated in the lessons observed and these were expressed in terms of what students would know and be able to do by the end of the lesson.
- Students' initiative and creativity were skilfully developed in lessons and meticulous attention was also paid to the development of practical, aural and composing skills.
- Every opportunity was taken to progress students' critical and analytical skills and to develop them as autonomous learners. For instance, many music-making activities were led by the students themselves and assistance was provided only when necessary.
- Material was presented in a coherent manner and all lessons were well structured and paced appropriately. A wide variety of methodologies was incorporated into lessons and these included using information and communications technology (ICT) as an interactive tool, and the use of student-centred activities such as crosswords and games to reinforce learning.
- A high level of student engagement in the lessons was evident, with a very strong emphasis on practical music-making activities. Students were afforded the opportunity to perform on their chosen instrument in addition to the class-based instruments, keyboard and tin whistle.
- The three components of Music, listening, composing and performing, were successfully integrated and the 'Sound before Symbol' approach to music was a core feature of all lessons.
- Differentiated strategies were used, thus successfully catering for the differing learning styles of students.
- Collaborative strategies such as group work were used to very good effect in lessons.
- The development of music literacy and numeracy was well integrated into each lesson. Students were challenged to make use of music technical language when providing responses to questions. In turn, questioning strategies used in many instances were thought-provoking and designed to encourage students to develop their independent analytical skills.
- Students' progress and competence is monitored and assessed effectively by a range of assessment modes including oral questioning, regular class assessments, homework assignments, and continuous monitoring of students' written and practical work. In line with good practice, students are provided with constructive comments to aid

improvement. All of these practices are indicative of a desire to ensure that all students achieve their potential. However, as there is an expectation that students will store additional materials in folders, there is a need to ensure that this work is also monitored from time-to-time.

- Learning was placed at the core of all lessons observed and the quality displayed by the students was of a very high standard.
- Students were very attentive, thoroughly engaged and participated very well in the learning process and clearly demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm in lessons.
- The music room is meticulously organised and vibrant, with many posters containing illustrations of varied music topics on display.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Management is very supportive with regard to provision and whole-school support for the subject. Access and uptake are generally very good but due to an expansion in curriculum provision, music is not formally timetabled for fifth-year students at present, although alternative arrangements have been put in place.
- A large and spacious room with adjoining storage facilities is available for music lessons. This ensures that the learning environment is flexible and ensures that all aspects of the music curriculum can be delivered. It readily facilitates the integration of performing activities such as choral and instrumental. Resources for music have increased since the last subject inspection occurred. It would be worthwhile to catalogue all resources so that there is an up-to-date record available.
- Timetable provision for Music is in line with syllabus guidelines, with an appropriate spread of contact time throughout the week, along with a sufficient number of double periods in all year groups to facilitate practical work.
- Management supports and encourages the teacher to engage with any initiatives that arise relating to continuing professional development in music education. The teacher has availed of many opportunities, including attendance at annual conferences hosted by the Post-Primary Music Teachers' Association (PPMTA).
- Students are afforded the opportunity to participate in a range of extracurricular and co-curricular activities. These include participation in a jazz band, traditional Irish group and a choir. Students regularly perform in carol concerts, school musicals and liturgical events. Strong links have also been established with the local community where, for example, the school has performed with the local choral society. The commitment and dedication of the teacher in the provision of these and other worthwhile activities is highly commended.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The music department comprises one, fully qualified teacher.
- Comprehensive planning documents which contained much information were presented during the evaluation. Attention has been paid to the manner in which the three components of music are being integrated.

- High-quality planning and preparation was observed throughout the course of the evaluation. Much time and effort has been spent by the teacher in developing a wide range of resources and materials to support students' learning. These have been meticulously filed so that they are readily accessible.
- Detailed records of students' achievement in homework, class tests and school-based tests are carefully maintained by the teacher.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the 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; a response was not received from the board.