

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

**Subject Inspection of MUSIC**  
**REPORT**

**Rockwell College**  
**Cashel, County Tipperary**  
**Roll number: 65300D**

**Date of inspection: 27 November 2012**



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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	27 November 2012
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in the lessons observed.
- Students were motivated and demonstrated a high level of engagement.
- Music has a high profile, is supported by management, is available to all students, and includes a good range of extra-curricular activities.
- The department has an extensive range of resources including information and communication technology (ICT).
- One room used for lessons needs re-organisation in order to optimise the learning opportunities for students.
- The music department and school management are well-placed to progress subject department planning.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Consideration should be given to the manner in which the layout of the music room could be re-organised in order to maximise the available space and to ensure flexibility for a range of music teaching and learning settings.
  - Subject department planning should be further progressed to include, a firm focus on intended learning outcomes and, to ensure that the plan is a flexible working document and open to review.
  - Further development of Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies which include peer assessment and reflective practice should be incorporated in the subject department plan and subsequently extended in the teaching and learning practices in the classroom.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Rockwell College is a co-educational boarding and day school under the trusteeship of Des Places Educational Association. The school has a current enrolment of 501 students. Music is available as an optional subject for both the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations. All students study Music in the optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- In all lessons visited, the quality of teaching and learning was good. A comfortable and warm atmosphere was maintained, and the music teachers created a positive learning environment through effective organisation and management of learning activities. There was a good rapport between the students and the teachers in a secure, enthusiastic and work-orientated atmosphere.
- Material was presented in a coherent manner and the purpose of each lesson was clearly established from the outset. In the main lessons were well-structured and paced accordingly. There was also a high level of student engagement in the lessons observed with some emphasis on music-making activities. The students were attentive, interested and participated well in the learning process and at no time were incapable of following the lessons.
- There was a variety of active teaching methodologies seen and good and effective use of the available resources, including ICT, was observed, albeit sometimes constrained by the physical setting in one room, as outlined below. As it is important to optimise every opportunity where students are engaged in active music-making activities, consideration as to how this particular setting can be adjusted would be in order.
- Objectives were stated in some lessons, while in others the learning outcome was shared with the students and sometimes revisited towards the end of the lesson. In keeping with the current development of AFL practices in the school, a focus on learning outcomes rather than objectives would be more appropriate in all lessons and could encourage students to become more active and responsible participants in their own learning.
- Students' progress and competence is monitored and assessed effectively by a range of assessment modes for example, oral questioning, regular class assessments, homework assignments, examination questions and continuous monitoring of students' practical and project work. Approximately every six weeks, a student progress report is sent home for all subjects across all year groups. This system allows for the careful monitoring of a student's progress and application, and is indicative of the commitment of the teachers to helping all students achieve their potential.
- It would also be worthwhile to organise assessment strategies which would help develop students as independent learners and allow them to take ownership of their own learning. Including comments of a formative nature in feedback to individual students would provide them with the direction to improve the standard of their work while the inclusion of some peer assessment strategies could also develop collaborative skills and encourage learning through discussion. Embedding this in classroom practice can only be realised once it is given due consideration in the planning process, as outlined below.

## **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 very good and appropriate provision is made for Music in all relevant curricular programmes.
- 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.
- There is an extensive range of resources available and includes specialist rooms, practice rooms and a concert hall. The main music room is in need of some reorganisation however, as the cumbersome furniture takes up the available space and militates against any flexible setting for music lessons. Sightlines to the whiteboard and projection area are sometimes restricted, and excessive glare in the room further impedes visibility for the students. It is recommended that an examination of the existing space and furniture is given some consideration in order to optimise the learning opportunities and allow for a more fluid learning environment where performing, composing and listening activities could be undertaken with minimal upheaval.
- Management supports and encourages staff to engage with any initiatives that arise relating to their continuing professional development in music education. Teachers avail of these opportunities where appropriate.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- There has been a high turnover of staff, for perfectly understandable reasons, in what was always a one-teacher department. To counteract the impact this has had on planning and continuity, management has allocated an additional teacher to the music department. This has helped to develop effective planning structures, which ensure continuity and smooth transitions for new members of staff, and helps to minimise undue disruption for the students.
- Some comprehensive planning documents were presented during the evaluation. Most aspects have been given due consideration and good cross-curricular links have been made, particularly with the TY programme. There was also some reference to Literacy and Numeracy and to differentiated teaching methodologies.
- The music department is well-placed to progress subject department planning while taking cognisance of the current context. It is thus recommended that planning be developed further by documenting planned learning outcomes, and ensuring that the plan is a flexible working document and open to review.
- In addition, an enhancement of the current AfL strategies, to include peer assessment and reflective practice, should be planned for and extended into classroom practice.
- In all lessons observed, clear objectives were evident, there was continuity from previous lessons and appropriate resources and stimuli were utilised. In general, a good level of planning for performing was evident in the prior preparation of relevant materials such as worksheets, audio and visual resources, and ICT settings. This indicates that short-term planning is at a satisfactory level.

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

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.

*Published May 2013*

# **Appendix**

**School response to the report**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management of Rockwell College wishes to thank the Inspectorate for the report received following the Subject Inspection of Music. It welcomes the findings of the Music Inspection Report in relation to the quality of teaching and learning and the high level of engagement and motivation demonstrated by the pupils in class. It is a great reflection of the work undertaken by the Music teachers in the College. The Board also appreciates the Inspectorate's acknowledgement that Music is supported by the management of the College.

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

With reference to the recommendations of the Report, the Board wishes to point out that the 'taster' system in First Year, and compulsory Music in TY creates larger than normal class sizes in the subject. This can put pressure on the designated Music Room for these lessons whereas the class sizes in general are smaller and have ample space. It will require some planning to have the Music Room structured in such a way as recommended by the Inspector. The Board is happy to address the issues raised and the existing space and furniture will be given careful consideration in order to maximise the learning experience for the pupils.

The Inspection and subsequent Report have identified many positives in the subject area of Music in Rockwell College. The content of the Report will be used to further strengthen the faculty and to build on the achievements to date.