

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of MUSIC  
REPORT**

**Mc Egan College  
Macroom, County Cork  
Roll number: 71030J**

**Date of inspection: 8 October 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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	8 October 2014
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teacher</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 teacher</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning of Music in the lessons observed was very good.
- A warm, comfortable classroom atmosphere was evident.
- Some good examples of the use of assessment for learning (AfL) strategies to inform students' learning were observed.
- Music as a subject was introduced four years ago and continues to grow.
- Access to the subject is very good and the arrangement with a neighbouring school to allow students study Music for Leaving Certificate is very positive.
- Some effective planning has been done in this single-teacher department.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The 'sound before symbol' approach should be consistently utilised to allow students experience a more meaningful exploration of the parameters of music.
  - To build on current progress, resources for Music should be further developed to include an appropriate sound system, suitable classroom instruments and the further development of information and communication technology (ICT).
  - Future subject planning should include a five-year plan incorporating the monitoring of uptake and achievement in the certificate examinations; development of resources; specific music teaching methodologies, and the identification of the strengths and challenges facing the department
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Mc Egan College is a co-educational secondary school under the trusteeship of the Cork Education and Training Board. Its current enrolment is 200 students. Music is available as an optional subject for the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate examinations, and is compulsory in the compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- A very good quality of teaching and learning was observed in the lessons visited. There was a warm classroom atmosphere with a very good rapport between the teacher and the students.
- The fact that there was a musical focus at all times and that the students were engaged in practical music-making activities were notable features of the evaluation. Student performing was of a good standard, contributed to the collaborative learning environment evident in the classroom and ensured that students achieved successful outcomes.
- A high degree of collaborative learning was also witnessed, frequently involving purposeful peer-peer interaction. Opportunities for independent learning were also maximised. These activities contributed to the high-functioning learning environment evident in the classroom.
- The effective use of AfL strategies, such as *'Think, Pair, Share'* was observed along with very good questioning and skilful explaining strategies. Very good examples of scaffolding were also observed, especially when the students were challenged in the areas of rhythmic dictation and sight-singing. These strategies helped to engage students in the learning activity, to check understanding, and to support students in the development of higher-order thinking skills. It was good to note also the ongoing monitoring of student progress in every lesson visited.
- Differentiation was observed where third-year students, at different levels of attainment, were assigned practical work at levels appropriate to their ability. A collaborative atmosphere ensued, where, through refinement, performance, assessment and encouragement, students prepared their performing component of the syllabus. Good standards of performance obtained, coupled with appropriate and supportive accompaniments by the teacher.
- Whilst acknowledging that some examples of the *'sound before symbol'* approach were observed during the evaluation, it is recommended that this approach 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.

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

- School management is very supportive with regard to provision and whole-school support for Music which is a relatively recent addition to the curriculum, having been introduced just over four years ago. Access to Music is very good and the uptake is steadily increasing over time. All first-year students study Music and make their choices for Junior Certificate at the end of that year. TY students have a half-year module of Music and produce a musical on alternate years.

Arrangements have been made with a neighbouring school to facilitate students who wish to take Music for Leaving Certificate. The music teacher also teaches in this school which ensures continuity of experience for the students.

- 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 profile of Music is continually raised through the wide range of extra-curricular activities and events taking place during the school year in which students are encouraged to participate. The TY musical, which alternates with the school's talent show, are both also significant contributors to raising awareness of Music and other school activities.
- Teaching resources are being acquired as the subject is developing. There is a spacious music room with a wide range of instruments, posters and ICT equipment. Plans are in train to acquire more instruments, specifically those that can be used as both learning and performing tools. It is recommended that the ongoing development of resources includes an appropriate sound system, classroom instruments and further development of ICT.
- The teacher is a member of the Post-Primary Music Teachers Association and attends many in-service courses run both by the association and by the Professional Development Service for Teachers.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Comprehensive planning documentation was presented during the evaluation and showed evidence of effective planning by the teacher. This documentation included an outline of music methodologies, references to AfL strategies, an analysis of the certificate exams, and approaches and methodologies to be used for students with special educational needs.
- In keeping with the school's policy on literacy, extensive work has been done on developing key words for aspects of Music. Effective planning has ensured that these are used consistently in lessons and there is a good display of key words, specific to Music, on display in the music room.
- It is noteworthy that work has also been done on developing aspects of numeracy in Music in line with the whole-school numeracy strategy.
- There was evidence of very good planning and preparation for individual lessons with all materials prepared in advance.
- In order to enhance the effective planning that has already been undertaken, it is recommended that a five-year development plan be instigated. Suggested aspects worthy of inclusion in this plan are as follows: the monitoring of the uptake and achievement in the certificate examinations; the development of resources; specific music-teaching methodologies and the identification of the strengths and challenges facing the department.

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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

*Published February 2015*