

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of MUSIC
REPORT**

**Coachford College
County Cork
Roll number: 70960D**

Date of inspection: 8 November 2013



**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	8 November 2013
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 three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- A very good quality of teaching and learning was observed in the lessons visited.
- There was a high level of student engagement with a focus on music-making activities.
- There is scope to develop assessment for learning (AfL) practices further in the teaching and learning of Music.
- Access to the subject is good and the range of extra-curricular activities helps to heighten awareness of Music and increase student involvement.
- There is a very well-resourced department which includes a wide range of information and communication technology (ICT).
- There is good planning in this single-teacher department.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consideration should be given to the manner in which AfL strategies could be extended to include a consolidation of the learning, student self-assessment and peer assessment practices.
 - The development of these AfL strategies should also be reflected in the music department plan.
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INTRODUCTION

Coachford College is a co-educational secondary school under the trusteeship of the Cork Education and Training Board. The school has a current enrolment of 566 students. Music is available as an optional subject for the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate examinations. All students in the optional Transition Year (TY) programme have an eleven-week module of Music.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- In all lessons visited, the quality of teaching and learning was very good. A comfortable and warm atmosphere was maintained, and the music teacher created a positive learning environment through effective organisation and management of learning activities.
- The extensive resources available in the music department, along with materials prepared by the teacher in advance, are used to facilitate good quality teaching and learning and contribute to an effective learning environment. ICT was used effectively in some lessons to support learning, and appropriate use of the whiteboard, along with a judicious choice of video clips and musical extracts were also noteworthy.
- A high level of student engagement was seen in lessons, with a firm focus on music-making activities. All lessons observed had an aural focus and some elements of performing which included singing and instrumental activities. Some of these lessons involved some aspects of rehearsal where students learned new material by rote and refined and reinforced this learning over time with performances noticeably improving as the lessons progressed.
- Student performances and demonstrations abounded, were of a good standard, contributed to the collaborative learning environment evident in the classroom and ensured that students achieved successful outcomes. 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.
- Aspects of AfL were sometimes used to support learning, one such aspect being the sharing of clear learning outcomes with the students at the outset of a lesson. It is recommended that this be enhanced further through a proper consolidation of the learning both during and towards the end of lessons.
- It would be very worthwhile also if other assessment strategies, such as peer assessment and student self-assessment, could also be introduced. These strategies could encourage students to become more active and responsible participants in their own learning. 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

- School management is very supportive with regard to provision and whole-school support for the subject. Access to the subject is very good, and there is a viable uptake for Music at both junior and senior cycles.

- Timetable provision for Music is in line with syllabus guidelines and generally there is an appropriate spread of class contact time throughout the week.
- An acoustically satisfactory specialist music room with flexible seating provides an effective learning environment and is very well-resourced, with an extensive range of music-teaching resources, and a variety of classroom instruments. There has also been considerable development of ICT resources which is very positive. The walls are adorned with posters and charts about Music and student work, which also contribute to a heightened awareness of the subject.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities and events which takes place during the school year. This variety helps to raise the profile of Music in the school, involves a sizeable proportion of the student cohort, and is a significant contributor to raising awareness of other school activities.
- The teacher has availed of many in-service courses in the past but for perfectly understandable reasons has allowed membership of the Post-Primary Music Teachers' Association (PPMTA) to lapse. Renewed contact with the PPMTA would be worthwhile. Even if attending meetings is problematic, the internet discussion forum is very useful. This forum would assist the teacher in networking with other music teachers and prevent professional isolation. Membership of the association also helps teachers to keep abreast of all information pertaining to music education at post-primary level and provides information about any opportunities for continuing professional development in music education.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- There is evidence of very good planning for the development of Music in this single-teacher department. Comprehensive programmes of work, scheduling the topics to be covered, have been developed and were found to be in line with syllabus requirements. Due consideration has also been given in planning to the wide range of cross-curricular and extra-curricular activities going on in the department. Some planning material is managed electronically and includes particular lessons and associated resources such as PowerPoint presentations and video clips for individual class groups.
- To develop subject department planning further, it would be worthwhile to include a focus on particular aspects of teaching and learning appropriate to Music. With this in mind, future planning should include consideration of specific music-teaching methodologies and differentiated learning strategies linked to specific programmes or series of lessons. It would also be worthwhile to link the range of literacy and numeracy strategies currently being utilised in the school into the overall music plan. Given that some planning is already being done electronically, there is no reason why these developments could not be undertaken in a similar way.
- In keeping with the recommendation above, regarding the expansion of AfL strategies in the classroom, it is recommended that any such development would also be reflected in the music department plan to ensure a greater impact on student learning.

- All programmes and schemes of work should become flexible working documents that include procedures for regular review and evaluation. However, as this is a single-teacher department, it would be important to ensure that these recommendations would be prioritised and undertaken within realistic and reasonable timeframes.

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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.