

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of MUSIC
REPORT

Hazelwood College
Dromcollogher, County Limerick
Roll number: 71850B

Date of inspection: 22 October 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**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	22 October 2012
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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good, with an aural focus maintained at all times.
- Students were engaged in meaningful music-making activities.
- Access to the subject is very good and the department is very-well resourced, although space is at a premium.
- There is a very positive classroom atmosphere which is conducive to learning.
- Subject department planning is ongoing but is mainly concerned with the longer term development of the music department.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The development of formative assessment strategies which, would allow students to take ownership of their own learning and enable them to develop a profile of their individual progress in a range of musical competencies, should be progressed.
 - Short-term schemes of work should be developed in the subject plan and include a focus on the suggested aspects outlined in this report.
 - All programmes and schemes of work should become flexible working documents that include procedures for regular review and evaluation.
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INTRODUCTION

Hazelwood College is a co-educational vocational school under the auspices of Co. Limerick Vocational Education Committee. The school has a current enrolment of 561 students. Music is available as an optional subject for both the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations but for logistical reasons is not offered as a subject in the optional Transition Year (TY) programme. All option bands are generated from student preference and first-year students choose their subjects for Junior Certificate prior to entry.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- All lessons observed 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.
- Aspects of Assessment for Learning were also used to support learning and were particularly effective with students in junior cycle. The use of strategies such as sharing clear intended learning outcomes with the students at the outset of a lesson and a consolidation of learning towards the end of the lesson was noteworthy.
- There was a high level of student engagement, and students' contributions to class discussions were valued, with praise used effectively to acknowledge their efforts. Some very good questioning and answering was also observed, with student responses affirmed and integrated into lessons where appropriate.
- In spite of the cramped conditions, good use was made of the classroom space and the range of resources, including information and communication technology, was skilfully used in the lessons observed.
- Differentiated teaching was observed in a lesson where groups of students practised with the teacher while others worked on other practical work. A collaborative atmosphere ensued, where, through refinement, performance, assessment and encouragement, students prepared their vocal and instrumental pieces and good standards of performance obtained, coupled with appropriate and supportive accompaniments by the teacher when necessary. Incidences of purposeful peer-peer interaction and a high degree of collaborative learning were also witnessed in this lesson. They contributed to the high-functioning learning environment evident in the classroom and ensured that students achieved successful outcomes. This is very good practice.
- Strategies linking aspects of the curriculum were utilised to very good effect with the areas of performing, composing and listening often integrated in a musically-focused way. Cross-referencing with other parameters of music occurred as appropriate in some lessons and also helped to integrate these three curricular areas.
- The teacher maintains a profile of each student's practical competency on an ongoing basis. These methods allow for careful monitoring of a student's progress, provide appropriate guidelines for performance and are indicative of the commitment of the teacher to helping all students achieve their potential in Music. It would be worthwhile if efforts were made now to allow the students to develop their own profile of their own musical competencies. This process would in turn assist students to reflect on their own learning and progress in Music.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Music enjoys a very high profile within the school. The support from management, the timetabling provision for the subject and the access arrangements for the students all reflect this. Uptake for Music in both junior and senior cycles is very high.
- Timetabling of the subject is very good with an even spread of classes over the week and double lessons to facilitate practical work.
- The wide variety of extracurricular music activities provides a rich musical experience that is challenging and rewarding for all the students. TY students, despite not having Music as a curricular subject, are heavily involved in the many extracurricular music activities that go on in the school.
- The department is extremely well-resourced but accommodation is very cramped. The teacher has given considerable thought to maximising every available space in the room, and has created an attractive learning environment with good displays of students' work, keywords, posters and projects. These displays are well used by the teacher and students to enhance the learning.
- The music teacher has availed of many opportunities for continuing professional development and is a member of the Post-Primary Music Teachers' Association.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The subject department plan outlines in general terms the content to be covered with each year group. This content was relevant to the syllabus and the requirements of the examinations, and included cross-curricular planning, and homework and assessment procedures.
- It is recommended that short-term schemes of work be included in the subject plan. These schemes should outline, in an integrated manner, a more detailed breakdown of the content to be covered, the corresponding learning outcomes to be achieved, the resources and methodologies employed to support the teaching of topics and the revision and assessment modes to be used by the teacher. It would also be important to build in to the planning, aspects that take account of student ability.
- Planning should also include the development a range of learning strategies for students and to facilitate ways in which they could be enabled to reflect on their own learning.
- In addition, the inclusion of a section for evaluation and review is recommended. This will provide a useful guide for future planning in the subject.
- As this is a single-teacher department, it would be important to ensure that these recommendations 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 teacher 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.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The BOM is very pleased with the very positive feedback from this inspection. The reports supports the very vibrant music department and the dedicated staff member who co-ordinates that department.

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

We welcome the recommendation and observations made by the inspectorate and will endeavour to carry out such recommendations to enhance the very good work that has already been witnessed in the music department.