

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of MUSIC
REPORT

Youghal Community School
County Cork
Roll number: 91513S

Date of inspection: 23 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	23 October 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• 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 teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in all lessons observed, with a positive classroom atmosphere and a good rapport between teachers and students.
- There is scope to develop the collaborative and cooperative learning environment and equally to foster independent learning.
- Music has a good profile in the school with strong uptake and a good gender balance.
- Access to the subject is good and all students in the school can experience music-making activities even if they are not studying Music as a curricular subject.
- Subject department planning is ongoing and comprehensive and is well-placed to proceed to the next stage.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teaching and learning strategies which would increase the opportunities whereby students could take ownership of their own learning should be developed.
 - Teachers should ensure that teacher-led instruction is well balanced with student input in all lessons.
 - The 'sound before symbol' approach should be consistently utilised to allow students experience a more meaningful exploration of the parameters of music.
 - Further development of Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies which include peer assessment and reflective practice should be incorporated in the subject department plan.
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INTRODUCTION

Youghal Community School is the sole education provider at second level in the Youghal area. This co-educational school has a current enrolment of 837 students. Music is available as an optional subject for both the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations. All students study a half-year module of Music in the optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in the lessons observed, with students mostly achieving the intended learning outcomes. In all lessons visited, a comfortable and warm atmosphere was maintained with a good rapport between teachers and students. A clear and fair code of behaviour was very much in evidence and provided a calm environment for learning to take place.
- The available resources, along with materials prepared by the teachers in advance, were used to good effect. Suitable worksheets and handouts were used to supplement textbooks and appropriate use of the whiteboard, video clips and musical extracts was observed. Information and communication technology (ICT) was also used effectively in some lessons to support learning.
- The teaching observed employed many strategies to engage the students and include them in all aspects of the learning process. These were almost exclusively teacher-directed however. It is recommended that these strategies be expanded in order to minimise teacher-led activities and to encourage students towards more self-directed and autonomous learning. These could include activities such as note making as opposed to note taking and incorporating more higher-order questioning for example. In addition, a more collaborative learning environment allowing constructive and productive peer-to-peer interaction and purposeful group work, where the teacher could guide students through various stages, is recommended.
- When new concepts and content were introduced, there was also a tendency to approach concepts by providing all the information first and then introducing the sounds. It is recommended that the 'sound before symbol' approach be explored to allow students experience a more meaningful exploration of the parameters of music and maintain an aural focus. This would ensure that opportunities to reinforce musical concepts and to encourage students to think musically are never wasted.
- Teachers monitored student learning effectively throughout the lessons observed. There is scope to develop student monitoring of their own learning through further engagement with the AfL strategies that encourage self-reflective practices.
- Some student folders and manuscripts had evidence of some organisation and were generally neat in appearance, while others were haphazard and contained loose sheets and handouts. Careful monitoring of students' materials is recommended, as valuable supplementary information and work will invariably go astray if not documented properly. Some guidance to help students to develop good organisational habits would also be worthwhile.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Music has a good profile with a healthy uptake and a satisfactory gender balance.
- Timetabling for the subject is mostly good but some anomalies exist due to various contextual factors. Some groups share two teachers for example, while other groups have their time allocation restricted and confined to one or two days a week. Management is aware of these anomalies and works hard to minimise them within the constraints of teacher allocation at present.
- The music department is well resourced, having two class rooms which are used for music lessons, both of which have a wide range of instruments, ICT and other relevant music resources.
- The wide variety of extracurricular music activities provides a rich musical experience for all students even if they are not studying Music as a curricular subject.
- 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 feasible.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning structures are well developed. A co-ordinator has been appointed and regular subject department meetings are appropriately documented.
- Comprehensive programmes of work, scheduling the topics to be covered, have been developed and were found to be in line with syllabus requirements. The material presented showed evidence that considerable thought has been put into the provision of a developmental sequence of learning for most of the class groups being taught, particularly in senior cycle. Considerable thought has also been given to short-term individual planning as evidenced by the careful prior preparation and organisation of the materials necessary for each lesson.
- In addition, comprehensive resources and repertoire for recorder are available. It is suggested that these be integrated into the planning documentation in order to clarify how they fit into the planned learning sequence for the students.
- As an entry point to the next stage of subject planning towards developing the quality of teaching and learning, it is recommended that future planning includes consideration of the increased use of AfL strategies such as peer assessment and student self-reflection.

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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.