

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Music
REPORT

Coláiste Pobail Ráth Chairn
Baile Átha Buí, Contae na Mí
Roll number: 71991T

Date of inspection: 3 May 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

Dates of inspection	2 and 3 May 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and the teacher• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and the teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in all lessons observed was exemplary.
- The development of literacy and numeracy in Music was well integrated into each lesson and many Irish-medium handouts and worksheets have been created by the teacher.
- A wide range of methodologies was used: on occasion, particularly innovative strategies were used as a means of reinforcing learning, and the three components of Music were successfully integrated into lessons.
- Learning was enhanced through the excellent rapport and positive classroom atmosphere which was evident in the classes visited.
- The level of engagement to continuing professional development (CPD) by the teacher is highly commended.
- A music plan has been developed and contains a large quantity of information. However, this plan does not reflect the many good practices that are observable in the organisation and delivery of the subject.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Over time, the music plan should be further developed: all of the teaching and learning strategies that are used in lessons should be recorded accurately and linked to topics, resources and modes of assessment. Long-term targets should be documented and the self-evaluation practices already in evidence in the music department should be developed further.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Pobail Ráth Cáirn is a co-educational post-primary school under the auspices of County Meath Vocational Education Committee (VEC). It is situated in the Meath Gaeltacht and all subjects, with the exception of English, are taught through the medium of Irish. The school caters for 128 male and female students. The Junior Certificate and the established Leaving Certificate programmes are taught in the school. An optional Transition Year (TY) is also available in senior cycle and Music is compulsory within this programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in all lessons observed was exemplary. All lessons were well structured. Learning outcomes were shared with students from the outset and lessons were appropriately summarised in advance of setting homework assignments.
- Overall, students were encouraged to think very deeply and critically about questions. Questioning strategies were very effective in helping to ensure a good level of understanding and in helping to ensure that appropriate levels of challenge were an integral part of lessons. However, on occasion, students were not given adequate time to respond. It is important that students are always provided with sufficient time to answer questions.
- Students' skills development was a key feature of all lessons. For instance, students' aural and practical skills were developed very successfully in the lessons observed. Nevertheless, care should be taken not to overburden students with too many aural activities in any one lesson.
- The development of literacy and numeracy in Music was well integrated into each lesson. The music teacher has created many Irish-medium handouts and worksheets in order to further develop students' knowledge of music vocabulary and to attend to their Irish literacy needs. This is commended.
- Very good links were established with prior learning at the outset of lessons. This approach supported continuity, the integration of new material and seamless lesson development.
- A wide range of very effective methodologies was used. It is good to note that the three components of Music, listening, composing and performing, were integrated into the lessons observed. In one lesson, innovative strategies were used to consolidate learning. These included the use of picture boards, which were created by the students themselves, and a game.
- Methodologies frequently involved students in activity-based learning. Examples included the use of the board to highlight and explain key musical concepts and the exemplary use of information and communications technology (ICT) to reinforce aural skills and to engage students in written tasks.
- Learning was enhanced through the excellent rapport, very good atmosphere, high expectations and affirmation of students' efforts evident in all lessons. Differentiated strategies were incorporated into lessons, catering for differing styles of learning. Students were engaged and motivated by the content and delivery of lessons in all classrooms visited.

- The music room is vibrant and very well organised with many posters containing illustrations of varied music topics on display. Commendably, students' work is also evident in the room.
- Formative assessment strategies were very well employed in all lessons. The positive comments and annotations in students' manuscripts and class tests are having a positive impact on students' learning. This good practice should now extend to notebooks.
- Examination results are analysed and academic achievement is closely monitored by management and by the music teacher. It is good to note the very positive trends which are beginning to emerge in this regard. Senior management meets with all subject departments, including Music, to reflect on student outcomes in certificate examinations and this is very good practice.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The uptake of Music is very good. The inclusion of a compulsory programme of Music in TY is positive as it provides opportunities for improvement in literacy skills, enhances skills development, and supports students in making informed subject choices for Leaving Certificate.
- Timetable provision for Music is in line with syllabus recommendations.
- Resources for Music are very good. As funds become available, the acquisition of a box of percussion instruments would further enhance this provision.
- Attendance at relevant CPD courses, further study and membership of a professional association are supported by senior management. The music teacher has attended courses provided by the Post-Primary Music Teachers' Association (PPMTA) and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). In particular, the teacher has obtained a post-graduate qualification from the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI, Galway) in order to enhance her skills in teaching through the medium of Irish. This commitment to personal CPD is highly commended.
- Students are provided with the opportunity to participate in a range of extracurricular and co-curricular activities. The commitment and dedication of the music teacher in this regard is acknowledged.
- Modes of assessment include formal examinations and regular class assessments. Reports are issued to parents during the year and parent-teacher meetings are held for each year group.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning and preparation for lessons was of a very high standard. This helped to ensure quality in the delivery of lessons and in supporting students in their work. Lesson resources such as worksheets and practical and ICT equipment were set up and ready to use.
- A subject plan was presented and this contained much information. Programmes of work have been developed for each year group. Appropriate links have been made between the

topic and the development of students' skills. However, the plan does not fully reflect the exemplary practices that are observable in the organisation and delivery of the subject.

- Over time, the plan should be developed in the following way: long term targets should be documented; topics should be developed by reference to learning outcomes, methodologies, resources and assessment; and the self-evaluation practices already in evidence in the music department should be developed further.
- TY planning is very good. Students are provided with a range of practical music-making activities. In addition, students are also afforded the opportunity to work independently of the teacher through project work.
- Formal time is allocated to all subject departments to meet and the music teacher uses this time to attend meetings with her colleagues from the history 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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.