

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Music
REPORT**

Belvedere College S.J.

Dublin 1

Roll number: 60520P

Date of inspection: 30 September 2011



**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	30 September 2011
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 seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- High quality teaching and learning was observed in all classes visited and the three components of Music were successfully integrated into lessons.
- Some attention has been paid to the creation of a stimulating learning environment.
- Occasionally, questioning strategies deployed were targeted to the more vocal student.
- Each music teacher expects students to store all materials in folders or hard-backed copies: the level of observance varied considerably between students.
- The uptake of Music is very good and has grown significantly in recent years.
- Music resources are very good and music technology is a strong feature of the music department.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The acquisition or development of a wider range of posters and display material would enhance the learning environment and support the further development of students' literacy skills.
 - Questioning strategies should be designed to ensure that the learning needs of the widest possible range of students are met.
 - The music department as part of its assessment practices should regularly monitor all materials being kept in folders or hard-backed copies.
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INTRODUCTION

Belvedere College, situated in the heart of Dublin city, is a fee-paying secondary school which caters for 1003 boys. The school offers Music as an optional subject within the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate programmes. It is also available as an optional component of the compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching in all of the lessons observed was very good. All lessons began with a clear statement of the learning objectives which were also recorded on the board.
- A wide variety of methodologies was used in lessons.
- Opportunities were taken to integrate the three components of Music: listening, composing and performing. This is very good practice.
- Students were provided with many opportunities to perform. For instance, in one lesson, attendance was recorded by singing the students' names to reinforce their understanding of music intervals.
- In some lessons, there was evidence of differentiated strategies being used. This was achieved, for example, by challenging students to work within their abilities.
- In some lessons, questions were targeted at the widest possible range of students. This is an important strategy in order to determine sufficiently the level of learning taking place and one that should be noted by all members of the music department.
- Classroom management regarding discipline was very good and any issues that arose were sensitively tackled.
- In all lessons observed, it was apparent that a mutually respectful atmosphere had been established.
- Some attention has been paid to the creation of a stimulating learning environment. Some posters are on display and these contain illustrations of a small range of music concepts.
- The acquisition or creation of additional posters will enhance the learning environment and will support literacy and numeracy development.
- The quality of learning displayed by students in all lessons was very good.
- Students are consistently encouraged to develop their musical vocabulary and, in one case, there was a clear effort being made by the teacher to improve general literacy skills. This is very good practice.
- Assessment of students' work varied in the lessons observed. Good practice was seen when students' work was corrected frequently, annotated appropriately and particularly where comments indicating strategies for improvement were provided.
- In most lessons, teachers monitored students as they worked on task. This is good practice.
- All music teachers expect students to store all materials in folders or hard-backed copies but the level of observance varied considerably between students. The music department should ensure that all students are taught how to organise themselves and, as part of its

assessment practices, monitor all materials being stored in folders or hard-backed copies frequently.

- Recent experience in the school highlighted the importance of all teachers, including those teachers employed for short periods of time, to be aware of and implement consistently the assessment policy of the music department.
- The music department optimises all information from its analysis of certificate examinations as a means of determining whether students are fulfilling their potential.
- It is good to note that senior management requires all subject departments including Music to identify any underachieving student and to provide a plan of action as part of its commitment to self-evaluation. This is very good and should inform teaching and learning into the future.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The uptake of Music in all year groups is very good and the school reports that there has been a significant improvement in this regard in recent years. The commitment of the teachers has clearly been a factor of this positive development.
- Timetabling of Music is in line with syllabus recommendations.
- The support systems that are in place for students selecting their optional subjects are appropriate.
- The resources and facilities for music are very good and include a number of computers. It is very good to note the extent to which music technology has been integrated into the music curriculum: current provision goes beyond the requirements of the practical component of certificate examinations.
- The music department is now staffed by five qualified music teachers and this figure is a positive consequence of the increased uptake of Music.
- The school is very supportive of teachers engaging in continuing professional development (CPD) and some teachers have attended courses offered by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and the Post-Primary Music Teachers' Association (PPMTA). The school reports that all teachers will be attending the forthcoming conference hosted by the PPMTA in October.
- There is an extensive selection and quantity of music activities on offer which includes a variety of instrumental ensembles, individual tuition, choral ensembles as well as participation in musical productions and concerts. Commendably, teachers give much of their time before and after school to provide these activities.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Management is supportive of collaborative planning and schedules formal time for all subject departments, including Music, to meet. The music department is required to develop a *Subject Improvement Plan* and regular meetings are held with the co-ordinator to determine progress and to identify further areas for development. This is excellent practice.

- The quality of planning in this department is very good.
- The TY programme is broad, varied and places a strong emphasis on practical music-making activities.
- The music department has developed a subject department plan which includes schemes of work which are timebound. This plan can now be developed further following discussions at subject planning meetings and documentation of methodologies being used by individual teachers in the delivery of topics.
- In most cases, teachers are at an appropriate stage in delivering the programmes of work for class groups. However, it is important that the music department conducts regular audits to ensure that progress in all classes is consistent with the agreed programmes.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the deputy 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, 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

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

1. Posters/Display Material

Work on key Musical Concepts/Features to support literacy skills has been undertaken by teachers – student work on class walls. A proportion of next year's department budget has been set aside for some new posters (in particular for the 'temporary' music room beside the library).

2. 'Questioning Strategies' in relation to students' abilities and needs to be discussed at next departmental meeting (If necessary advice to be sought from Key Skills team).

3. Monitoring of materials in students' folders to be discussed at next departmental meeting (Hard Back copies are currently not required by students).