

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Music
REPORT**

Loreto Secondary School

Wexford

Roll number: 63660A

Date of inspection: 7 October 2011



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN MUSIC**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	7 October 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 five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching ranged from quite good to very good: a wide variety of methodologies was used in lessons. In most lessons observed, the quality of learning was very good.
- In all lessons, a mutually respectful atmosphere has been created.
- Students are consistently being encouraged to develop their musical vocabulary and literacy skill: this is very good.
- The music department has developed an assessment policy but this needs to be implemented more consistently.
- The level of engagement by both teachers in continuing professional development is very good.
- The music department has developed a subject department plan which includes a broad outline of programme content for each year group. This plan can now be developed further.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is essential that learning is placed as the core focus for all activities.
 - The music department should now ensure that its assessment policy is implemented consistently.
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INTRODUCTION

Loreto Secondary School is situated in the heart of Wexford town and caters for 699 girls. The school offers Music as an optional subject within the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate programmes. It is also a mandatory component of the Transition Year (TY) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed ranged from quite good to very good. However, learning outcomes should be communicated to students from the outset.
- A wide variety of methodologies was used in lessons and where appropriate, this included the integration of the three components of Music, listening, composing and performing.
- While useful information can be provided to students prior to engaging with a new genre of Music, they should, where possible, be given the opportunity to experience the new genre independently, prior to any teacher input, in order to develop their own critical analytical skills.
- In all lessons observed, teachers had established a mutually respectful rapport with their students who were engaged and motivated in all activities and, consequently, classroom management was very good.
- In most lessons observed, the quality of learning was very good.
- Opportunities were provided to students to work independently of the teacher. For example, in a junior cycle lesson, students were divided into two groups to clap contrasting rhythms, unaided by the teacher, and this is a very good strategy.
- In one lesson observed, students engaged in project work which in itself is a very good strategy. However, in this instance, the value of this activity was not fully realised, as learning was not placed as the central focus and this should be borne in mind.
- Students are consistently being encouraged to develop their musical vocabulary and literacy skills and this is very good practice.
- The music department has developed an assessment policy but this needs to be implemented more consistently. For instance, assessment of students' work varied in the lessons observed.
- Good practices were seen when students' homework was corrected frequently and annotated appropriately. Equally good practice was evident when the teacher had developed a profile outlining progress and achievement for each student.
- Music teachers should now exchange samples of student work to ensure that there is consistency of marking across the department.
- Handouts and worksheets are provided to students and this is very good. However, a system which requires students to store these materials should now be developed, so that there is a tangible record of work which is readily available for revision purposes.
- Information regarding achievement in certificate examinations is available and analysed each year by the music department. However, increased attention should now be focused

on attainment at the uppermost level with a view to ensuring that all students are realising their full potential.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Timetabling of Music is in line with syllabus recommendations. First-year students sample all subjects including choir for the full academic year and then choose from a menu of subject options.
- The uptake of Music in all year groups is very good.
- The support systems in place for students selecting their optional subjects are appropriate.
- The resources and facilities for music are very good. Music technology is available as an option for the practical component of certificate examinations.
- The school is very supportive of teachers engaging in continuing professional development (CPD) and the level of engagement by both teachers in this regard is very good. Both have attended courses offered by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and the Post-Primary Music Teachers' Association (PPMTA).
- Commendably, students are afforded the opportunity to participate in a range of music activities. These include choir which has performed in various venues and choral festivals, a relatively newly-formed orchestra and the bi-annual school musical produced in partnership with a neighbouring school.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Management is supportive of collaborative planning and schedules formal meeting times for all subject departments, including Music, to meet.
- School self-evaluation processes have recently been initiated by management as all subject departments, including Music, are now required to develop a Subject Improvement Plan. This is excellent practice.
- However, the music department has identified some areas for development which are outside the remit of this process. Attention should now be given to what can be achieved by music teachers as part of these self-evaluation practices.
- The quality of planning in this department is very good.
- The TY programme is broad, varied and includes a module on music technology.
- A subject department plan has been developed which includes a broad outline of programme content for each year group which is 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 addition, consideration needs to be given to how music teachers will cater for the literacy and numeracy needs of students. This should form part of whole-school planning so that the plan reflects some practices that are happening in lessons.

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, 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 board warmly welcomes this report into the teaching and learning of Music in the school.

It is very affirming to note that the inspection report recognises the fine quality of both teaching and learning of Music in the school as well as the detailed levels of planning, preparation and training engaged in by the teachers. It is particularly pleasing to note that the relationship between students and teachers is seen as being “mutually respectful”.

The board is most appreciative of the generosity displayed by the Music teachers in promoting such positive out-of-classroom musical experiences e.g. school choir, orchestra, liturgical events and musicals. Combined with very positive classroom outcomes, these activities all serve to place Music at the core of the educational experience of so many students in the school.

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

The Music department will continue to ensure the consistent implementation of its assessment policy.

Music teachers will continue to maintain high levels of attainment by students in this subject as well as their enjoyment of it.