Subject Inspection of Music
REPORT

Bush Post-Primary School
Dundalk, Co Louth
Roll number: 71750U

Date of inspection: 29 September 2011
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN MUSIC

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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MAIN FINDINGS

• The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was generally good but, in one lesson, an over-reliance on the white board by the teacher led to issues regarding classroom management.

• Some opportunities were taken to integrate the three components of Music: listening, composing and performing.

• The music department has created a stimulating learning environment with a wide variety of posters containing many illustrations of music concepts.

• In all lessons observed, teachers monitored students as they worked on task but assessment of students’ work varied. Good practice was seen when students’ work was corrected frequently, annotated appropriately and when comments indicating strategies for improvement were provided.

• Each teacher has independently developed a programme of work for their class group.

• There is an extensive selection of music activities on offer which include a variety of instrumental tuition and choir as well as participation in concerts. Commendably, teachers give much of their time to provide these activities.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

• It is essential that there is a sufficient level of advance teacher preparation for all lessons in order to avoid unnecessary use of the white board so that all students are working on task at all times.

• Every opportunity should be taken to integrate the three components of Music where appropriate.

• It is important that students’ work is corrected frequently.

• In developing programmes of work, there is much scope for the music department to plan collaboratively and for the teachers to share good practices and resources.
INTRODUCTION

Bush Post-Primary School is situated in the Cooley peninsula and caters for 469 male and female students. The school participates in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. Music is offered as an optional subject within the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate programmes. It is not currently available in the Transition Year (TY) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed ranged from fair to good to very good.
- A wide variety of methodologies was used in lessons.
- Some opportunities were taken to integrate the three components of Music but there is scope to ensure that this practice is more widespread.
- Practical activities were integrated into lessons and overall the standard was very good. However, during recorder classes, students should be frequently reminded of the correct stance and manner in which the instrument should be held in order to improve performance.
- In a composing lesson, music technology was used to very good effect but there is further scope to optimise other practical skills. For instance, students, rather than the teacher, could be afforded the opportunity to demonstrate theoretical concepts where possible.
- In most lessons, classroom management regarding discipline was very good. However, when the level of advance planning was inadequate, issues arose which resulted in an over-reliance by the teacher on use of the white-board. Consequently, a number of students became disengaged and their poor behaviour went unnoticed and unchallenged.
- It is essential that there is a sufficient level of advance teacher preparation for all lessons so that all students are monitored and engaged throughout. This is strongly recommended.
- In most lessons observed, it was apparent that a mutually respectful atmosphere had been established.
- Commendably, a stimulating learning environment has been created by the music department. A variety of posters is on display and these contain illustrations of a wide range of music concepts designed to reinforce students’ literacy skills.
- Overall, the quality of learning displayed by students was good.
- Students are consistently being encouraged to develop their musical vocabulary and 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 when comments indicating strategies for improvement were provided.
- In all lessons, teachers monitored students as they worked on task and this is very good practice.
- The music teachers expect students to store all materials in folders or copies but the level of available materials varied considerably in all lessons. These materials should be monitored frequently.
The music department has established a practice of exchanging class groups for the assessment of practical activities and this is very good. This practice could also extend to written work.

The school conducts an analysis of certificate examination results in all subjects including Music. This information should be used to determine if all students are reaching their full potential.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The uptake of Music in all year groups is very good but currently the number of students in one particular class group is very large. The school reports that it intends to create a second music class for the next academic year which would benefit all these students.
- Timetabling of Music is in line with syllabus recommendations.
- The resources and facilities for music which are very good include a number of computers. It is very good to note the extent to which music technology plays an integral part in the music curriculum. Current provision goes beyond the requirements of the practical component of certificate examinations.
- The music department is staffed by two qualified music teachers. One teacher has been assigned responsibility for all senior cycle music.
- In order to build capacity in the team, it is recommended that the teaching of Music in junior and senior cycles is shared or rotated between both teachers.
- The school is very supportive of teachers engaging in continuing professional development (CPD) and both teachers have attended courses offered by the Post-Primary Music Teachers' Association (PPMTA).
- There is a good selection of music activities on offer, which includes a variety of instrumental tuition and choir as well as participation in concerts. Commendably, teachers give much of their time to provide these activities.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- DEIS planning is well under way in this school and a targeted DEIS plan for Music has been developed. This is excellent practice.
- Management is supportive of collaborative planning and schedules formal time for all subject departments, including Music, to meet.
- Each teacher has developed a template to assist in the development of programmes of work for each year group.
- These schemes can now be developed further following discussions during subject planning meetings and documentation of methodologies being used by individual teachers in the delivery of topics.
- There is much scope for the music department to plan collaboratively and to share good practices and resources. The deployment of the two teachers to both junior cycle and senior cycle will facilitate this process more readily.
• In most cases, teachers are at an appropriate stage in delivering their individual programmes of work. However, it is important that the music department conducts regular audits to ensure that progress in the delivery of the music courses is appropriate for all year groups.

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

Very worthwhile experience for the Music Dept. Very helpful feedback.

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

Dept. meeting held with Principal to outline best practice for meeting the recommendations outlined in this very helpful report.