

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Music
REPORT**

**St Joseph's Secondary School
Rush County Dublin
Roll number: 60343T**

Date of inspection: 1 October 2013



**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	30 September and 1 October 2013
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 two single and one double class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was very good with some excellent practices in place.
- A wide variety of teaching strategies was deployed in all lessons.
- Practical music-making activities were a core feature of all lessons observed as students were provided with ample opportunities to display their skills.
- In all lessons, very good efforts were made to develop students' skills as autonomous learners.
- Management is very supportive with regard to provision and whole-school support for the subject and uptake trends have increased steadily in recent years.
- Very good reflective practice is a hallmark of the music department.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The further development of differentiated strategies to cater for the wide range of student abilities will further enhance the high quality teaching and learning methodologies already in place.
 - Over time, the music department should ensure that all of the very good practices happening in lessons are reflected in the music subject plan.
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INTRODUCTION

St Joseph's Secondary School is a voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 669 students. The school offers a wide range of programmes including the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year, the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was very good with some excellent practices in place. For instance, the three components of Music, listening, composing and performing, were effectively integrated into all lessons.
- In most classes visited, learning objectives were shared at the start of lessons and in line with good practice, revisited towards the end of lessons. Commendably, these were expressed in terms of what the students would know or be able to do by the end of the lesson.
- A wide variety of strategies was deployed in all lessons and these included student-centred games, pair and group work activities and the use of concrete materials to demonstrate music theoretical concepts. The further development of differentiated strategies to cater for the wide range of student abilities is recommended.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used effectively in all classrooms visited. Appropriately, students engaged with ICT in a manner which effectively further developed their abilities as critical thinkers.
- Practical music-making activities were a core feature of all lessons observed. Students were provided with ample opportunities to display their practical skills both as a stand-alone activity and as a means of reinforcing aural and theoretical concepts.
- The development of music literacy was effectively integrated into all lessons. Students demonstrated their knowledge using an appropriate level of music vocabulary and technical language.
- In all lessons, very good efforts were made to extend students' skills as autonomous learners. In addition, strong emphasis was placed on the acquisition and development of music skills in listening, composing and performing activities.
- Both music rooms contained a variety of visual displays with illustrations across a range of music topics. The addition of posters containing illustrations of traditional Irish instruments will enhance this provision.
- Very good questioning strategies were used in the lessons. For instance, higher and lower-order questions were used very successfully in all lessons. Both global and directed questions were used. Students provided responses that demonstrated the ability to attain a high standard of critical thinking.
- Students are being exposed to a wide variety of music genres and this is very good. In all lessons, the selection of resources including music clips was very appropriate for the students.
- Students' progress and competence is monitored and assessed effectively and a high level of support is provided to them. However, it is important that all materials such as hard

backed notebooks and folders be monitored. Where appropriate, common assessments are set for students.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Management is very supportive with regard to provision and whole-school support for Music. Uptake trends have increased steadily in recent years.
- Timetabling is appropriate for all year groups and in line with syllabus guidelines.
- First-year students are provided with a short taster programme and essentially, a “best fit” approach is taken to the creation of subject bands.
- The music department is staffed by two fully qualified music teachers, both of whom have completed post-graduate studies. This is a relatively new department and it is evident that the teachers are working very well together. In addition, there is a strong commitment to continuing professional development by the team.
- Strong links exist between the music and the special educational needs departments. For instance, every effort is made to provide extracurricular activities that are inclusive of all students. Strong links have been established with the local community as many performances have occurred in various locations in Rush. The commitment and dedication of both teachers to the range of music activities available to students is highly commended.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Management facilitates collaborative planning through the provision of time for all subject departments, including Music, to meet. Planning documentation was presented which contained much detailed material. Very good reflective practice is a hallmark of this department. Over time, the music department should ensure that all of the very good practices happening in lessons are reflected in the music plan.
- The music department should also document its priorities for development in the music plan and outline strategies and a timeframe for their achievement.
- Individual planning and preparation was excellent in all lessons observed. A very good balance between teacher and student input was effectively achieved.
- Teachers are sharing ideas and resources consistently. In line with good school self-evaluation practices, peer observation could now be undertaken as a means of further sharing of good practice.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, 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; a response was not received from the board.

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