An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Music
REPORT

Beech Hill College
Monaghan
Roll number: 72210Q

Date of inspection: 20 May 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 observed during lessons ranged from good to very good and students’ work is regularly assessed.

• Opportunities for integrating the three components of Music, listening, composing and performing, were not always optimised.

• Classroom management in all lessons was very good and a positive and warm rapport has been established with all class groups.

• To date, music technology has not yet been made available to students as an optional component of the practical examination.

• The variety and quantity of music activities that are available is very good.

• In recent years, there has been no uptake of Music in senior cycle.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

• An integrated approach to Music lessons should be taken at every opportunity.

• The music department should ensure that music technology is made available to students from the next academic year.

• The music department in collaboration with senior management should explore the reasons why there is currently no uptake of Music in senior cycle and devise strategies to counteract this phenomenon.
INTRODUCTION

Beech Hill College operates under the auspices of County Monaghan Vocational Education Committee and caters for 222 male and 188 female students. The school participates in the Department of Education and Skill’s Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan for educational inclusion. It offers all available mainstream programmes to all levels. Transition year (TY) is an optional programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good. Good routines were established in all lessons from the outset.
- Most lessons observed were devoted to examination preparation which is appropriate given the time of the year.
- A wide variety of methodologies was used which included ICT, questioning and practical performances by the students.
- Opportunities to integrate the three components of Music, listening, composing and performing, were not always optimised. For instance, in a lesson focussed on a prescribed work, a large proportion of students’ time was spent listening to the Music and responding to questions when it was also possible to integrate a performing component.
- Composing was very successfully integrated into a performing lesson. Students performed on tuned percussion instruments in order to reinforce their understanding of harmony and this was very good.
- Classroom management in all lessons was very good and any issues that arose were sensitively tackled.
- In all lessons observed, it was apparent that a positive and affirming rapport has been established between the teacher and the students.
- Attention has been paid to the creation of a vibrant learning environment. Many posters, both hand crafted and professionally produced, are on display and these contain illustrations of a wide range of music concepts which support both literacy and numeracy development.
- The quality of learning displayed by the students was very good.
- Students are consistently being challenged to use music vocabulary which illustrates the commitment by the teacher to the improvement of their literacy skills.
- Questioning strategies deployed were targeted at a wide range of students who were challenged to think analytically and critically at every opportunity.
- In this school, assessment of students’ work occurs frequently. All music work is annotated appropriately and this is very good practice as it guides student learning.
- The music department should use the information from the analysis of certificate examinations that is available in the school as a means of determining whether students are fulfilling their potential. The outcome of this process should inform teaching and learning into the future.
SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Music is currently available as an optional subject in junior cycle, a mandatory subject in the TY programme and in the Leaving Certificate Applied programme.
- In recent years, there has been no uptake of Music in fifth year and sixth year. Management, in collaboration with the music department should explore the reasons for this with a view to expanding Music once again into senior cycle.
- Timetabling provision for Music is in line with syllabus recommendations.
- The support systems that are in place for students selecting their optional subjects are very good.
- The music department is well resourced but the provision of a percussion kit of instruments will be very beneficial to the work of the teacher.
- The music department should compile a list of all resources currently in the department and include this information in the plan.
- To date, music technology has not yet been made available to students as an option for the practical examination. To cater for the diversity of students, it is recommended that the music department prioritises the inclusion of music technology as part of the music curriculum.
- The music department is staffed by one fully qualified music teacher. The teacher has attended many music courses such as those provided by the Post-Primary Music Teachers’ Association (PPMTA) and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). This level of engagement by the teacher is very good.
- The variety and quantity of additional music activities available to students are very good. The music department has established very good links with the local community in this regard.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- High quality planning is a hallmark of this department.
- The school facilitates all subject departments including Music to meet each term. The teacher uses these planning times for Music or to meet with colleagues from her other subject.
- Records of all planning meetings have been kept.
- The music plan provides detailed information regarding the organisational features of the department as well as programmes of work for all year groups.
- The TY programme is varied and provides students with a breadth of musical experiences. It is good to note that practical music-making is a core feature of the TY plan.
- All programmes of work for each year group are timebound and include some information regarding the intended learning outcomes. Over time, the music teacher should track and document the manner in which different components of the music curriculum are being delivered and the modes of assessment being used to determine students’ learning.
• Planning and preparation for each lesson was of a high quality. The music teacher has
developed or acquired a bank of music resources. Differentiated resources were also
developed and used effectively in one lesson observed and this is very good practice.

• The teacher meticulously tracks students’ progress in homework and class assessments as
well as in-house examinations and she keeps detailed records. This is very good.

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

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.

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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

- Music technology software has been purchased by the School. Additional PCs have been ordered to accommodate music technology.
- The school must operate within teacher allocation. The school offers a variety of subjects for Leaving Certificate. The numbers in Leaving Certificate were lower during the academic years 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011. The numbers who chose music were very small, about 2-4. It was not possible to provide a subject for such a small number of students and remain within teacher allocation. Music has been offered to Leaving Certificate Year 1 students in the current academic year.