

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Music
REPORT

Mount Carmel Secondary School
Kings Inns Street
Dublin 1
Roll number: 60853T

Date of inspection: 7 February 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

Date of inspection	07 February 2013
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and the teacher• 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 and the teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in all lessons observed was very good.
- Meticulous attention was paid to students' skills development and the 'Sound before Symbol' approach to music was adopted in the lessons.
- Overall, attention is being paid to the development of students' music literacy and numeracy needs.
- Questioning strategies were very good and there was an appropriate balance between higher-order and lower-order questions.
- The level of commitment to continuing professional development is very strong in this school.
- The school is supportive of the music department: time is provided for all subject departments, including Music, to meet; resources for Music are very good.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- In recorder lessons, music sheets should be given to all students to further enhance the students' music literacy skills.
- All students' written work should be monitored and marked at appropriate intervals.

INTRODUCTION

Mount Carmel Secondary School is a voluntary Catholic secondary school for girls and caters for 331 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, the Leaving Certificate and the Transition Year programmes (TY).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in all lessons observed was very good. These lessons were well structured and well delivered, with a clear focus on the skills development of students.
- The aim of the lesson was shared with students from the outset and commendably, in keeping with good assessment for learning practices, the learning of the lesson was checked both during and at the end of the lesson. This work could be enhanced further by providing students with a clear statement of the learning intention of each lesson.
- An appropriate variety of content and methodologies were incorporated into all lessons and it is good to note that the three components of Music, listening, composing and performing, were successfully integrated. The inclusion of pair work for some aural activities should be included in lessons, where appropriate.
- Meticulous attention was paid to the development of students' skills using a high level of aural work and practical music-making activities, thereby ensuring that an appropriate emphasis is being placed on the 'Sound before Symbol' approach to Music. For instance, theoretical concepts were reinforced through performance by the students themselves.
- All choral activities were introduced by appropriate warm-up exercises and students are well taught regarding the discipline of good choral and recorder playing.
- Attention is being paid to the development of students' music literacy and numeracy skills and it is good to note the strong links that exist between the music department and the special educational needs department in this regard.
- In one lesson, recorder sheets were provided which contained letter names instead of music notes. There is a need to provide music sheets to all students in order to enhance their music literacy skills. Additional support could also be given to those students encountering difficulties with reading music through the provision of explanatory music sheets.
- Performance of rhythmical patterns was undertaken in some lessons through the inclusion of clapping activities. It is important that opportunities are provided to students to clap independently of the teacher in order to determine their level of accuracy.
- ICT was used very effectively as an interactive tool in lessons and to reinforce learning. Commendably, students are provided with notes after they have engaged with music material themselves and formed their own learning.
- Questioning strategies were used to determine the extent of students' understanding and knowledge. A very good combination of lower-order and higher-order questions were successfully incorporated into the classes observed and students were constantly challenged to think critically and analytically for themselves.

- Learning was at the core of all lessons observed. This was enhanced through the excellent teacher-student rapport, very good atmosphere, high expectations and affirmation of students' efforts in lessons. The quality of learning displayed by the students was very good.
- The music room is vibrant and well organised with many posters containing illustrations of varied music topics on display.
- Examination of students' written materials highlighted the need to include more unprescribed listening activities in the first-year programme. This is important so that students' analytical skills are being developed from the start of their musical education.
- As part of the assessment strategies of the music department, students' manuscripts are being marked. However, as the quality of work varied, it is essential that this good practice is applied to all components of Music and includes students' folders and copies.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The uptake for Music is very good. Support systems that are in place for students when selecting their optional subjects are appropriate. Following a recommendation made in a whole school evaluation, this now includes the provision of a booklet containing information about subjects. Consideration should be given by the school to extending to the current sampling programme for first-year students.
- Timetable provision for music is in line with syllabus recommendations and resources for Music are very good.
- The music teacher has attended many courses provided by the Post-Primary Music Teachers' Association (PPMTA) and by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). The music teacher is also expanding her own practical skills. This commitment to continuing professional development is commended.
- Students are provided with the opportunities to participate in a range of practical music-making activities such as choir and the school musical. This is very good.
- Modes of assessment include formal examinations and regular class assessments. The music department has developed an assessment policy but this could be further enhanced by including all of the assessment practices currently in place and by the addition of peer assessment strategies.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The music department comprises one, fully qualified music teacher.
- The school provides formal time for all subject departments, including Music, to meet. The music teacher uses such planning times to plan for the curricular needs of students. From time to time, arrangements could be put in place for the music teacher to meet with other similarly sized departments to discuss common issues regarding teaching and learning.
- High quality planning and preparation for lessons was observed throughout the course of the evaluation. All materials were set up and ready for lessons. Much time and effort has been spent by the teacher devising handouts and worksheets for students.

- A music plan has been developed and this contains much information. The inclusion of an improvement plan for the future development of the subject will enhance this very good work and will reinforce the reflective practices that are happening on the ground.
- The current planning template for short term schemes of work needs further development so that it is reflective of all the very good practices that are happening in music lessons.
- Records of students' achievement in assessment tests are being maintained. From time to time, a record of progress in homework activities should also be kept.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the subject teacher at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.