

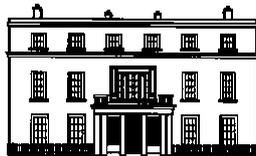
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of MUSIC
REPORT**

**Midleton College
Midleton, County Cork
Roll number: 62370J**

Date of inspection: 25 November 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	25 November 2013
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teacher• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was mostly good in the lessons observed but was considerably hindered by the cramped conditions of the music room
- All lessons observed were characterised by a warm atmosphere and mutual respect.
- Music as a subject is undergoing constant development with a gradual increase in uptake.
- Extra-curricular music activities and events play an important role in the college.
- A thorough re-organisation of all physical resources is necessary in order to support the further development of the subject.
- There is scope to develop planning further both for teaching and learning and for the development of departmental resources.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- A thorough re-organisation of the music room should be undertaken in order to maximise the considerable restricted space.
 - A collaborative learning environment which allows for more peer-to-peer interaction and fewer teacher-led activities is recommended in all lessons.
 - Efforts should be made to ensure that performing, composing and listening are integrated in every lesson and that the 'sound before symbol' approach is consistently utilised to allow students experience a more meaningful exploration of the parameters of music.
 - The three recommendations above should also be reflected in planning documentation for Music while taking cognisance of the fact that this is a single-teacher department.
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INTRODUCTION

Midleton College is a co-educational, fee-paying, secondary school with a current enrolment of 374 students. Music is available as an optional subject for the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate examinations, and in the compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was mostly good in the lessons observed but was hindered by the cramped conditions in the room as outlined below. All lessons were characterised by a warm classroom atmosphere with very good interpersonal relations between the teacher and students.
- All lessons began with an outline of aims and objectives which indicated what was to be covered during each lesson. It would be worthwhile to move towards the idea of learning outcomes or learning intentions which could be shared with the students in more realistic and tangible ways. This learning should also be consolidated during and towards the end of each lesson thus ensuring the students have experienced successful outcomes.
- Lessons observed were almost exclusively teacher-directed, mostly as a result of the restricted classroom space. Where possible, ways in which this could be re-balanced should be explored, even in the cramped conditions. Strategies which would minimise teacher-led activities and would encourage students towards more self-directed and autonomous learning should be used. A more collaborative learning environment where the teacher is more of a facilitator would foster more independent learning on the part of the students. Activities such as note making rather than note taking, peer-to-peer interaction and purposeful group work are thus recommended.
- When new musical concepts and content were introduced, there was a tendency to approach these by providing all the information first and then introducing the sounds. It is recommended that the 'sound before symbol' approach be explored to allow students experience a more meaningful exploration of the parameters of music.
- Although the coursework is well addressed, it is recommended that more integration of the three elements of the syllabus be developed to ensure a better balance between performing, listening and composing. This would ensure that opportunities to reinforce musical concepts and to encourage students to think musically are never wasted.
- Students' work is checked regularly by the teacher to monitor standards of work completed. It was good to note that encouraging comments were provided by the teacher to enable better learning and improvement. Other annotations however involved outlining what was missing rather than suggesting ways to improve learning. There is scope here to engage in more formative assessment strategies by including constructive comments and also introducing some student self-assessment and peer assessment practices.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Although student numbers are relatively small, the department is growing, is supported by management and the awareness of Music as a subject is being constantly heightened. It is encouraging that there is a large group in the current fifth year and, contrary to national trends, the gender balance is very good at both junior and senior cycles.
- Timetable provision for Music is in line with syllabus guidelines. There is an appropriate spread of class contact time throughout the week along with a sufficient number of double periods in all year groups to facilitate practical work.
- The current music room is generally unsuitable due to its restricted space and sound leakage between it and the adjoining practice rooms. A thorough re-organisation of the space and some type of sound proofing may be necessary as an interim measure until a more suitable environment is developed. However, as this might not be the most cost-effective solution, other avenues should also be explored. This was discussed at the time of the evaluation and management indicated that a solution will be progressed quite soon which will certainly benefit the department. It is acknowledged by management that what is required is a purpose-built, well-designed area for music which would help to minimise didactic instruction and would maximise student learning allowing the students to experience Music as an active participatory subject.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and events involving Music which take place during the school year. This variety helps to raise the profile of Music in the school and is a significant contributor to raising awareness of other school activities.
- The teacher is a member of the Post-Primary Music Teachers Association and commendably attends in-service courses and conferences organised by the association and those run by the Professional Development Service for Teachers.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- There is evidence of good planning by the teacher. This planning includes an outline of courses, repertoire to be covered and a wide range of topics for the TY programme. Given this wide range, it would be worth revisiting the TY plan to ensure a more realistic set of activities which would increase the level of student involvement and would have more of an aural rather than an academic focus.
- There is also very good liaison with the other teachers involved in music activities in the college and some close cross-curricular links with other subject departments.
- A key area of focus for improvement should be a developmental plan for the department. This should include the re-organisation of the room, as outlined above, and the development of resources to suit the range of music-teaching methodologies which could be realised as soon as a suitable learning environment is achieved.
- In terms of planning for teaching and learning, it would be important that the integration of performing, composing and listening in all lessons is given due

consideration. Furthermore, once the new learning space is achieved, ways in which a more collaborative learning environment could be developed should be explored.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teacher at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school 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 of Management of Midleton College welcomes the Inspection Report into the teaching of Music at the College. The Board acknowledges and affirms the significant development of Music both as a curricular subject at Junior and Senior Cycle and as an important co-curricular component of the life of the College.

The Board recognises the need to advance the further development of Music through the provision of physical resources which provide for the expanding needs of the subject area. The Board will work to ensure that this is achieved within the next phase of campus development.