

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Music
REPORT

Ratoath College
Ratoath, Co Meath
Roll number: 76088T

Date of inspection: 12 December 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	11 and 12 December 2013
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning in four double class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Overall, the quality of teaching in the lessons observed was very good.
- A wide variety of effective teaching strategies was deployed.
- Students were appropriately engaged in lessons and the balance between teacher and student input was very good.
- The school has well-established school self-evaluation (SSE) practices in place.
- The music department applies a wide range of effective assessment strategies.
- Management is supportive with regard to provision for music, and resources and facilities for the delivery of the subject are good.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Differentiation to cater for the more able student is an area that merits further attention by the music department.
 - It is timely that a long-term vision be developed for Music in the school.
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INTRODUCTION

Ratoath College is a co-educational school which caters for 988 students. The school offers a wide range of programmes including an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. Music is available as an optional subject in almost all curricular programmes but it is a mandatory component in TY.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was very good. In some cases, the three components of listening, composing and performing were effectively integrated. However, there is scope to increase the use of this strategy. For instance, students should be afforded the opportunity to perform their own compositions where possible.
- In general, lessons were well structured, contained an appropriate variety of content and were delivered in a logical and sequential manner. In all cases, effective links were made with previous lessons.
- Students were made aware of the intended teaching aim and in some cases, this was also expressed in terms of what students would know or be able to do at the conclusion of the lesson. This very good practice should be utilised where possible.
- A wide variety of effective teaching strategies was deployed including the use of teacher instruction, pair work and group work, show me boards, information and communication technology (ICT) to display information, and a student-centred game to summarise learning.
- Students were appropriately engaged in lessons and the balance between teacher and student input was very good.
- Practical music-making skills featured in all lessons where students played on their chosen instrument, sang or clapped to reinforce their understanding of rhythms. It is important that opportunities be given to students to clap independently of the teacher where appropriate.
- Very good use was made of higher-order and lower-order questions to assess students' learning and to encourage students to use technical language to develop their literacy skills. However, care should be taken to ensure that questions are targeted at the widest possible range of students.
- Teaching and learning activities were generally pitched at a level suitable for the majority of students but differentiation to cater for the more able student is an area that merits further attention by the music department.
- In all lessons observed, a mutually respectful learning atmosphere was evident. Very good efforts have been made to develop learning environments that are visually stimulating for students.
- Students' work is regularly assessed and assessment for learning (AfL) strategies are applied. In addition, a system of moderation used by the teachers facilitates a standardised approach to the correction of written work. Furthermore, common assessments are given to students where possible. These are very good practices.
- The school has well-established SSE practices in place. In line with management expectations for all subject departments, the music department has analysed examination

results and established targets to improve student achievement where necessary. In addition the music department has developed a criteria for success policy for students.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Music has a good profile in the school and overall the uptake is very good. However, the expansion of the curriculum has impacted on the uptake of Music in first year.
- Very good systems are in place to support students when selecting their optional subjects.
- Timetabling is appropriate for all year groups and is in line with syllabus recommendations.
- Management is supportive with regard to provision for music, and resources and facilities for the delivery of the subject are good. However, in some cases, lessons are not held in the music room. Senior management in consultation with the music department could now devise a strategic plan regarding the further acquisition of resources so that over time, a second room could be more adequately equipped for the delivery of Music.
- The music department is staffed by three fully qualified music teachers and all are current members of the Post-Primary Music Teachers' Association (PPMTA). Attendance at relevant conferences is encouraged for all members of the music department as this will further ensure that teachers are kept up-to-date with ongoing curricular developments.
- A wide variety of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities available to students complement the ongoing curricular work in lessons. These include the school talent show, musical, traditional Irish music group, choir, and a senior and junior music group comprised of singers and instrumentalists. It is good to note the contributions being made by other members of staff to these activities.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Management facilitates time for all subject departments including Music to meet. In addition, informal meetings are held between music teachers and this is very good.
 - The current music department was established in September 2013 following changes in some personnel. Collectively, it is evident that it is working effectively but there is scope for greater collaboration regarding subject planning.
 - Planning documentation was presented which contained much detailed material. Very good reflective practices were outlined in the documentation including the establishment of short-term targets. To build on this excellent practice, it is timely that a long-term vision be developed for Music in the school.
 - All lessons were prepared well as materials and equipment were ready. It is commendable that much time has been spent by the music department devising resources beyond the text book to enhance students' learning.
 - All subject departments including Music have developed an individual website where resources can be readily accessed by teachers and students. This is an excellent practice.
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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, 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 Ratoath College welcomes the main findings of the report and the positive affirmation of the teaching and learning of Music in the school. The report also notes the evidence of the “mutually respectful learning atmosphere” which is central to the school’s ethos

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

School management will work closely with the Music Department to develop a long term vision for the development of music in the school and will, where possible ensure that the necessary resources are made available to the department to further this development.