An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Music
REPORT

St Mary's Secondary School
Baldoyle, Dublin 13
Roll number: 60021U

Date of inspection: 04 April 2014

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN MUSIC

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	04 April 2014
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and teachers • Interaction with students	• Observation of teaching and learning in three lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged between good and very good.
- A variety of teaching and learning methodologies was integrated into lessons and these included some innovative and creative practices.
- The development of music literacy and numeracy was well integrated into each lesson.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used to good effect.
- Management is very supportive with regard to provision and whole-school support for the subject, and facilities for Music are very good.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adequate time should be given to students during lessons to answer questions and to challenge them when necessary to improve the quality of their responses.
- The assessment strategies of the music department should be reviewed.
- Management in consultation with the music department should now develop a medium to long-term plan for the acquisition of resources and equipment, as funding permits.

INTRODUCTION

St Mary's Secondary School under the trusteeship of the Religious Sisters of Charity is an all-girls catholic voluntary secondary school and caters for 290 students. The school offers the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged between good and very good. All lessons were characterised by a warm classroom atmosphere with very good interpersonal relationships between teacher and students. High expectations provided an effective environment conducive to learning.
- Learning outcomes were effectively communicated to students as they were expressed in terms of what students should know and be able to do.
- A variety of teaching and learning methodologies was integrated into lessons and innovative use was made of 'show me' boards and student-centred games.
- The three components of music, listening, composing and performing were integrated particularly well in one lesson. In this instance, a composing and performing activity made effective use of music that students had already engaged with in a listening activity during an earlier stage of the lesson.
- A good level of student engagement in the lessons was supported by the use of pair work, group work, questions, written tasks and singing.
- ICT was used to good effect in one lesson through the use of video clips. Other well-chosen resources were integrated at appropriate stages in lessons.
- The development of music literacy and numeracy was well integrated into each lesson. Students were challenged to think analytically and critically in lessons and to make use of technical language when responding to questions.
- The quality of learning demonstrated in lessons was good. However, in order to determine the full extent of student knowledge and understanding, it is very important that adequate time is given to students to answer questions and to challenge them when necessary to improve the quality of their responses.
- Students' progress and competence is monitored by a range of assessment modes including oral questioning, class assessments, homework assignments and written work.
- In one instance, students' compositions were marked during the lesson. However, some errors were not identified and left uncorrected. Overall, there is a need to review the strategies for correcting compositions.
- It is good that many opportunities were provided to students to engage in practical music-making activities. However, in one lesson, it was evident that some students needed more guidance to improve the quality of their performance than had been provided. During such practical activities, care must be taken to ensure that adequate support is provided to students to enable them to improve over time.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Management is very supportive with regard to provision and whole-school support for the subject. Arrangements for access are good. All incoming first-year students are provided with a short sampling programme and the timetable is amended to accommodate their choices. Fifth-year students are also provided with an open choice of optional subjects.
- Uptake is generally good but there is currently no fifth-year music class. The commitment of the school to ensuring comprehensive provision within the context of existing resources is commended.
- Facilities for Music are very good. A large and spacious room with an adjoining room are available for music lessons. Management, in consultation with the music department should now develop a medium to long-term plan for the acquisition of resources and equipment as funding permits.
- Timetable provision for Music is in line with syllabus guidelines. There is an appropriate spread of contact time throughout the week and a sufficient number of double periods in all year groups to facilitate practical work.
- Management supports and encourages the music department to engage with any initiatives that arise relating to the continuing professional development of the music teacher. Many opportunities have been availed of including attendance at annual conferences such as those hosted by the Post-Primary Music Teachers' Association.
- Students are afforded the opportunity to participate in a variety of co-curricular and extracurricular activities such as liturgical ceremonies and a TY production. The commitment of the teachers involved in this provision is commended.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A subject plan has been developed and contains programmes of work for all year groups. These are generally expressed in terms of content with some indication of the methodologies being used. Over time, the good work already achieved in subject planning could be progressed through the inclusion of a vision for the future development of Music and the linking of topics to methodologies and assessment practices.
- High quality preparation and planning for lessons was observed throughout the course of the evaluation. All lessons contained an appropriate level of content and student activities.

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

Published September 2014