

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Music  
REPORT**

**Ardgillan Community College  
Balbriggan, County Dublin  
Roll number: 76129H**

**Date of inspection: 25 April 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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	25 April 2013
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teacher</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during two double and one single class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teacher</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed varied with some very good practices in place.
- The purpose of the lessons was clearly established from the outset and material was presented logically.
- Very good efforts were made to integrate strategies which facilitated the active engagement of learners but an appropriate balance between whole-class teaching and small group or individual teaching was not always achieved.
- All lessons were characterised by a warm classroom atmosphere with a well-established culture of mutual respect and trust in evidence.
- Management is very supportive with regard to provision and whole-school support for the subject.
- A comprehensive planning document was available and resources prepared for lessons were of a high quality.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Students should be afforded the opportunity to demonstrate their learning before the conclusion of lessons.
- Attention should be paid to ensuring that there is an appropriate balance between whole-class teaching and small group or individual teaching.
- Strategies to promote student engagement with a piece of Music should regularly include opportunities for critical thinking and an independent personal response.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Ardgillan Community College, under the auspices of County Dublin Vocational Education Committee, caters for 408 male and female students. This school was opened in 2009. It currently offers the Junior Certificate programme and the optional Transition Year programme (TY). From September 2013, it will offer the Leaving Certificate programme. Music is mandatory within the TY programme.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed varied with some very good practices in place.
- Material was presented logically and sequentially and the purpose of each lesson was clearly established from the outset. In line with good practice, time was set aside at the end of lessons to revisit the learning objectives. However, students were not always afforded the opportunity to demonstrate their learning before the conclusion of lessons. Learning would be further enhanced by a greater level of student engagement in the recapping of lesson content.
- Very good efforts were made to employ strategies which facilitated the active engagement of learners. These included practical performances by students and the use of pair work for the completion of worksheets.
- In general, planning for lessons was good. However, sometimes an appropriate balance between whole-class tuition and small group or individual tuition was not achieved. This needs to be addressed.
- All lessons were characterised by a warm classroom atmosphere. A culture of mutual respect and trust was evident in all classes visited.
- Skills development was a very good feature in lessons. For instance, students are making very good progress in their practical activities. Commendably, students demonstrated the ability to perform independently of the teacher.
- The development of music literacy was well integrated into each lesson. Students were challenged to make use of appropriate technical language when providing responses to both oral and written questions.
- In one lesson, students responded to a piece of music and completed a detailed worksheet. However, from time-to-time, it would also be useful to allow students the opportunity to provide a personal response prior to any formal written activity. This would demonstrate their ability to think critically and independently of the teacher.
- Very good practice was seen when the components of Music such as listening and performing were integrated in the lesson.
- Lessons were most effective when the activities were varied. However, in one lesson, student performance was the dominant methodology. This can be appropriate when part of examination preparation. However, in this instance, teaching and learning would have been enhanced if it was interspersed with other activities.
- Students' progress and competence is monitored and assessed effectively by a range of assessment modes including oral questioning, regular class assessments and homework

assignments. Peer assessment and student self-assessment are other noteworthy practices in use by the music department.

- Good progress is being made in the aspects of students' coursework that were presented during the evaluation but the unavailability of written work in other components precludes any further comment in this regard.
- The music room is meticulously organised with many posters containing illustrations of varied music topics on display. The addition of illustrations pertaining to theoretical concepts in music will enhance this provision.

#### **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Management is very supportive with regard to provision and whole-school support for the subject. Access and uptake are very good and appropriate provision is made for Music in all curricular programmes.
- A standard classroom is available for music lessons. However, management has indicated that a more appropriate room will be available for music lessons once a planned extension is completed.
- Timetable provision is in line with syllabus guidelines, with an appropriate spread of contact time throughout the week, along with a sufficient number of double periods in all year groups to facilitate practical work.
- The teacher has availed of many relevant opportunities, including attendance at annual conferences hosted by the Post-Primary Music Teachers' Association and the Professional Development Service for Teachers. The music teacher has also upskilled in the area of special educational needs and English as an Additional Language. This is very good.
- Students are afforded the opportunity to participate in a range of extracurricular and co-curricular activities including participation in the school choir, TY musical production and a school-based talent competition. The commitment and dedication of the teacher in the provision of these worthwhile activities is highly commended.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The music department comprises one, fully qualified teacher.
- Comprehensive planning documentation which contained much information has been developed. Attention has also been paid to the development of detailed programmes of work which place learning at the centre of all activities.
- High quality preparation for lessons was evident throughout the course of the evaluation. Much time and effort has been devoted to the development of a wide range of resources and materials to support students' learning.
- Records of students' achievement in homework, class tests and school-based tests are being carefully maintained by the teacher.

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.

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