

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Music

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Our Lady Of Mercy College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Beaumont Dublin 9
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60870T

Date of Inspection: 14-05-2019



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agus Scileanna**
Department of
Education and Skills

SUBJECT INSPECTION

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Music under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date of inspection	14-05-2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Our Lady of Mercy College, Beaumont is a voluntary secondary school which has an enrolment of 406 girls. Originally established by the Sisters of Mercy, the school is now under the trusteeship of CEIST – Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust. The school provides the Junior Cycle, Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and an optional Transition Year (TY). Music is mandatory within the TY programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- Teaching and assessment practices observed were highly effective and many exemplary practices were evident.
- The quality of students' learning was very good in the lessons observed and students were competently able to demonstrate knowledge.
- The music department conducts an annual audit of achievement in certificate examinations and some targets are being set.
- Subject provision and whole-school support for Music is very good and commendably year groups are allocated a class period for choir.
- The quality of planning and preparation for lessons by the music department is very good.
- Students are provided with a broad and varied music programme although the music plan contains insufficient information in some areas.

Recommendations

- The music department should continuously review attainment trends to ensure that all students are achieving at the optimal level.
- The music plan should be developed to include a more comprehensive record of the curriculum programmes being delivered and, over time, the units of learning being delivered in Junior Cycle Music.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Four lessons were observed across junior and senior cycle. The quality of teaching in these lessons was highly effective.
- All lessons were very well planned and were in line with the planned programme of work for the year. Very good use was made of additional resources to enhance students' learning experiences. These resources supported the incremental development of knowledge and skills.
- It is good that learning intentions were shared with students in lessons. These were appropriately differentiated in accordance with students' needs and abilities. However, students were not always provided with clear success criteria when tasks were set. Sharing success criteria would impact positively on students' learning as it would make them more aware of what is expected and encourage them to extend their learning during the course of the lesson.
- A very good teacher-student rapport was evident in all lessons. Students were challenged appropriately and were provided with ample opportunities to reflect on and improve their responses to questions.
- Performing was expertly integrated into composing activities in most lessons and this approach enabled students to improve their work. However, in one lesson, students engaged with composing as a technical exercise. Teachers should, where possible, ensure that performing is integrated into composing in order to help students further develop their knowledge and understanding of the composing process.
- Notwithstanding the time of year and the necessary emphasis on examination preparation, students were provided with ample opportunities to engage actively in lessons. Highly effective and creative teaching approaches were used by the music department throughout the evaluation. In lessons where the focus was on revision, students were highly motivated by the varied and creative strategies that were deployed.
- Choral activities were observed in some lessons and students performed proficiently. However, no time was afforded to them to warm up their voices in advance. It is important that students are provided with appropriate preparatory exercises in advance of all choral activities.
- The quality of learning observed was very good and suitable to a mixed-ability setting. Students were able to demonstrate knowledge competently and were being comprehensively prepared for examinations. Music literacy terms were used frequently by students in lessons.
- Ample opportunities were provided to students to work collaboratively. These activities were well organised and impacted positively on their learning. All students were assigned clearly defined roles and learning outcomes were effectively differentiated.
- Students were seen to be autonomous learners and asked questions confidently of their peers and the teachers.
- Assessment practices in use by the music department were very effective and support student development and progression. For instance, high expectations were clearly established by the music department regarding the management and storage of students' materials. Copies and manuscripts were monitored frequently and constructive comments were provided.

- It is good that the music department conducts an annual audit of achievement in the certificate examinations and some targets are being set. Uptake at higher level is very good but attainment trends should be monitored more closely to ensure that all students are fulfilling their potential.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole-school support for Music is very good.
- Music is well resourced and a designated room is available for the delivery of all music lessons.
- Timetable provision for Music is very good and in line with syllabus recommendations. The school also provides one class period each week for choir to all year groups.
- Students are well supported when selecting their optional subjects. Parents of incoming first-year students are provided with an information evening as well as one-to-one meetings with the principal. Similar arrangements are in place for parents of TY and fifth-year students.
- The music department comprises three subject specialists. One teacher has sole responsibility for teaching Music in junior and senior cycles, while the remaining teachers are deployed to teach Choir. The music department makes good use of formal planning time to plan collaboratively in relation to the extracurricular and co-curricular programme that is available to students. It would be useful for all music teachers to share expertise and extend the level of collaboration to formal curriculum planning.
- The music department displays high levels of commitment and dedication to the development of the subject in the school and this is commended. A wide variety of extracurricular activities is available to all student. Activities include instrumental lessons, chamber choir and a school band. Students have also been afforded the opportunity to perform in external activities such as the Emmanuel Concerts.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation for lessons by the music department is very good. A wide and varied programme is provided to students in junior and senior cycle.
- Planning practices are inclusive of students with special educational needs. Much time and effort have been devoted to the creation of resources that have been tailored and adapted to meet the needs of students.
- A high level of reflective practice is apparent in the work of the music team. A comprehensive music plan has been developed. However, this plan does not contain sufficient detail to reflect the full extent of the music programme being provided to students. When reviewing the plan, the music department should ensure that it is more reflective of the broad range of musical experiences being provided to students.
- In first year, the music plan contains some of the practices required by the curriculum reform at junior cycle. However, units of learning are underdeveloped and require further attention.

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 INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;