



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Music Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Loreto College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	53 St Stephens Green Dublin 2
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	60820E
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	14-12-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	04/03/2024

What is a 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 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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the <i>Procedures</i>) since the previous report to the board.3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils/students.

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

Subject inspection

Dates of inspection	13-12-2023 & 14-12-2023
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students, including focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 5 lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Loreto College, St Stephen's Green is a fee-charging secondary school under the patronage of the Loreto Education Trust. The school has a current enrolment of 583 girls and offers the following programmes: Junior Cycle, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was very good with some exemplary practices noted.
- Students' experience of Music was rooted in meaningful music-making activities and the three components, listening, composing and performing, were integrated into lessons.
- Students' learning experiences were of a high quality and they were motivated and active participants which led to very good learning outcomes.
- Highly effective assessment practices were evident including the provision of helpful feedback on students' written materials.
- The quality of planning and preparation for lessons was very good and the high level of collaborative planning was apparent.
- Music was very well supported by senior leaders; facilities and resources were very good.

Recommendations

- All students should be monitored when engaging in tasks during lessons so that any learning needs can be addressed promptly.
- It is important that when students are not involved in a performing activity, they should be assigned a focused task so that there is a clearly defined learning outcome for them.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the lessons observed was very good with some exemplary practices noted. All lessons had clear learning intentions which were closely aligned to the planned learning outcomes. Teachers integrated a range of activities which were suitable to the students' learning needs.
- Lessons were well planned and in line with the planned programme of work for each year group. The music department had created a variety of resources including DLT materials that effectively supported students' learning.
- Teachers explained new content clearly to students and, overall, provided them with very clear instructions in advance of all class-based activities. Questions were varied in lessons and students were challenged and encouraged to provide higher quality responses where necessary. It was evident that learner outcomes were suitably differentiated. For instance, during composing activities, students who were more able were encouraged to develop their work further and include more advanced compositional elements.
- The music department created a vibrant learning environment and set very high expectations of students in terms of their knowledge and skills development.
- It was very good that in almost all lessons, each element of the lesson was linked so that students' experience of listening, composing and performing was contextualised in meaningful learning activities. Students experienced the 'Sound before Symbol' approach which is highly effective practice. The development of aural skills was a prominent feature in lessons. Students engaged with composing and listening components through performance. This integrated approach to Music is excellent practice.
- There were many opportunities for students to participate in choral activities either within music lessons or in formal choir lessons. Students' diction, musicality, tone and posture were generally appropriately addressed when required. The quality of students' performances during choir was very good particularly in light of the high numbers that were performing.
- All learners actively engaged in lessons. There were many opportunities provided to them to work in pair and group work activities that were well planned. Students who participated in the focus group meeting were very positive about their learning experiences and favoured the many chances to engage in collaborative activities with their peers.
- In one instance, a small number of students were not actively involved in a performing activity which was appropriate in the context of the lesson. They were required to listen to the performances of their peers. While these students were very well behaved and listened attentively, there was scope for them to be provided with a specific task so that they could contribute new learning to the lesson.
- The quality of learner outcomes was very good and students demonstrated high quality learning in lessons. For instance, they were able to perform competently, readily demonstrate understanding of music intervals using tonic solfa, and confidently engage with digital learning technologies (DLT). Students were competent at improvising and were very creative particularly during some composing activities.
- Students presented as critical thinkers when questioned and were able to hypothesise and defend their responses. They were also able to identify their own errors and make necessary adjustments. Meticulous attention was paid to the development of students' music vocabulary which they used seamlessly during lessons.
- Students were highly motivated and enthusiastic learners. All lessons were characterised by mutual respect between teachers and students and between the students themselves. During the focus group meeting, students also commented on the respectful relationships that exist. In particular they stated that any errors identified in their class work and homework were addressed sensitively and with kindness by teachers.

- The quality of assessment practices was very good. Generally, students were well monitored during lessons as teachers circulated to check on their progress. This strategy should be incorporated into all lessons so that any issues regarding learning can be addressed more promptly. Questions deployed in lessons were varied and not only assessed the accuracy of content knowledge but also required students to apply their learning. Students' skill development was assessed regularly during lessons.
- Students' copies, manuscripts, folders and digital materials were being effectively monitored. It was good that in addition to oral feedback provided during lessons, students' written materials contained helpful comments from teachers to further support their learning and showed that teachers had responded to individual needs.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- Subject provision and whole-school support for Music was very good. Two spacious rooms and a sizeable storage room were available to the music department.
- Three fully qualified teachers were deployed to the music department. Music was appropriately timetabled in all year groups. All incoming first year and fifth-year students were provided with an open menu of subjects and the timetable was generated around their choices.
- The senior leadership team had invested significantly in music equipment, resources including DLT. All music students had access to portable devices and a number of desktop computers. This is very good as it readily facilitated students' engagement with music technology in lessons.
- It was evident that the school had engaged well with school self-evaluation. One of its themes was a focus on differentiated learning approaches for students with additional educational needs. The music department and the senior management team reported on the many supports that have been put in place in order to build capacity in this regard. The music department was very aware of the whole-school expectations as evidenced by information contained in the music plan and in the teaching and learning strategies deployed in the lessons observed.
- The school was very supportive of teachers wishing to avail of professional learning opportunities. It was good that all music teachers had attended a range of courses that support teaching and learning as well as their own professional development.
- A highly impressive array of co-curricular and extracurricular activities was available to students and these were provided by the music department. These included participation in liturgical ceremonies and thematic music events such as Seachtain na Gaeilge in addition to choirs and the school orchestra. The school also collaborated with a boys' school and students participated in the school musical. The dedication of the music department in the provision of these and other activities is highly commended.
- Students during the focus group meeting also expressed appreciation for the wide range of activities that were available for them.

3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of planning and preparation for all lessons was very good.
- Senior management allocated time for all subjects, including Music to meet. In addition, the music department met informally on many occasions.
- A comprehensive music plan was developed and it was evident that the music department planned collaboratively. They had adopted many highly effective practices. In the plan for junior cycle music, high quality units of work had been developed which illustrated that a wide range of learning experiences was being provided to students. It was good that elements of junior cycle planning templates were also being used in senior cycle. This consistent approach to planning is very good.
- The school provided an online digital platform and it was commendable that the music department was optimising this facility. It was positive that first-year students were

provided with DLT learning experiences from the outset, allowing them to develop skills and become confident users of music technology.

- The music teachers had developed common assessments which is very good as it helps to ensure that different class groups are provided with the same learning outcomes. To build on this very good work, music teachers could provide students with an additional assessment practice by correcting students' work from a different class group. This should provide both students and teachers with a valuable assessment experience.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principals and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management acknowledges the school's and the teachers' commitment to the long tradition of Music in Loreto College and to the dedication to ensuring that the high standards set many years ago endure through the development of new pedagogies and changing curricula. The extra-curricular and cross-curricular experiences of students including public performances outside the school are examples of the Music department's commitment to their subject area and their students. The board acknowledges that the recommendation about higher order questioning from the WSE/MLL in 2017 has been addressed and recognised by the inspector.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The Music department will work collaboratively to address the recommendations in the report.

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 quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	<i>Very good</i> 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 <i>outstanding</i> 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	<i>Good</i> 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	<i>Satisfactory</i> 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	<i>Fair</i> 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	<i>Weak</i> 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;