

# *Music Policy*

■ **Title:** Polasaí Ceol Scoil Mhuire, Maigh Cuilinn, Co. na Gaillimhe

## ■ **Introductory Statement and Rationale**

### **(a) Introductory Statement**

Inservice was provided for music during the school years 2004-2006. The existing approach to music was reviewed and changes necessary to the implementation of the new music curriculum were identified. In collaboration with the teaching staff, the following plan was formulated.

Music education in Scoil Mhuire (a large rural mixed school) is concerned fundamentally with developing and nurturing the child's appreciation and understanding of the arts. Arts education encompasses a variety of activities in the visual arts, in music, in drama, in dance and in literature. These activities and experiences help the child make sense of the world; to question, to speculate and to find solutions; to deal with feelings and to respond to creative experience.

### **(b) Rationale**

We teach music to provide children with opportunities to engage with a wide range of musical styles and traditions, to become involved in moving, dancing, illustrating, storytelling and making drama. Our Music Curriculum introduces children to music reading and writing, to song singing and to playing classroom instruments.

The reason(s) why it was decided to focus on this area for development

*e.g.* To aid the teaching and learning of music in our school

To provide an articulate approach to the teaching of music throughout the whole school

To appraise the existing plan for music incorporating the 1999 Primary School Curriculum

To create a core curriculum for all facets of music for all class levels

## ■ **Vision and Aims**

### **(a) Vision**

As we believe that Scoil Mhuire is a place where children will be empowered to use their talents and to develop their potential to the full, we recognise that all children have musical ability and must be given an opportunity to participate in and access the music curriculum. It is also accepted that each child comes to us with diverse levels of musical experience and that each child therefore will have their own unique starting point. We believe that a child-centred approach is appropriate in this as in other areas of the curriculum.

Our awareness of our local and national musical heritage informs our teaching in Scoil Mhuire. We also endeavour to inspire an interest in and openness to an extensive variety of musical traditions and genres. We hope in our teaching to nurture enjoyment in music making, to seek to cultivate the skills, understanding, knowledge and attitudes of the child, to allow for musical growth and the development of creativity in the child. An understanding of music and the capacity to access music, if harnessed in their early years, is seen as something which will be of benefit to the children throughout their lives, enhancing their lives and the lives of those around them.

### **(b) Aims**

The aims of the music curriculum in Scoil Mhuire are, as stated in the Curriculum for Music, as follows:

- to enable the child to enjoy and understand music and to appreciate it critically
  - to develop the child's openness to, awareness of and response to a wide range of musical genres, including Irish music
  - to develop the child's capacity to express ideas, feelings and experiences through music as an individual and in collaboration with others
  - to enable the child to develop his/her musical potential and to experience the excitement and satisfaction of being actively engaged in musical creativity
  - to nurture the child's self-esteem and self-confidence through participation in musical performance
  - to foster higher-order thinking and lifelong learning through the acquisition of musical knowledge, skills, concepts and values
  - to enhance the quality of the child's life through aesthetic musical experience.
- (Primary Curriculum, Music, P. 12-13)

In addition we hope to develop in particular an awareness of the rich musical heritage of the local area and of the musical tradition of County Galway.

## **■ Curriculum Planning**

### **1. Strands and Strand Units**

The three strands of the Music curriculum are as follows:

#### **Listening and responding**

- Exploring sounds
  - environmental
  - vocal
  - body percussion
  - instrumental
- Listening and responding to music

#### **Performing**

- Song singing
  - unison singing
  - simple part singing
- Literacy
  - rhythm
  - pitch
  - rhythm and pitch
- Playing instruments

#### **Composing**

- Improvising and creating
- Talking about and recording compositions

## The musical elements

*The (inter-related) musical elements are*

A sense of **Pulse** (steady beat)

A sense of **Duration** (long/short, patterns, rhythm)

A sense of **Tempo** (short/slow)

A sense of **Pitch** (high/low)

A sense of **Dynamics** (loud/soft)

A sense of **Structure** (same/different)

A sense of **Timbre** (tone, colour)

A sense of **Texture** (one sound/ several sounds)

A sense of **Style**.

***We aim to guide the children to an understanding of these concepts through the Music curriculum. The terms themselves may be introduced at a senior level.***

## 2. Approaches and Methodologies

All children will be actively engaged in music education in our school. Approaches and methodologies used will be based on the active learning strategies recommended in the Curriculum.

- talk and discussion
- active learning
- collaborative learning
- problem solving
- skills through content
- use of the environment

The three strands of the curriculum are taught at all levels pitched at an appropriate level for the class, taking into account both the mixed age groups and the varying musical backgrounds within one class. As regards the Literacy strand unit within the Performance strand both tonic solfa and staff notation are taught from the lower end of the school, whilst the reading of the stave in a more formal manner, is introduced in the senior classes.

Percussion instruments are used at all levels.

Tin whistle tuition begins in Rang a 2 with Tommy Keane, who is a professional traditional Irish music musician, employed by Gaelacadamh, An Spidéal .

The *Colourstrings Music Literacy Programme*, in association with Maoin Cheoil na Gaillimhe and the Galway Music Residency, started in October 2013 and teaches Junior and Senior Infants pre- literacy skills in music. We hope to build on these weekly lessons, with the view, to giving each child in Scoil Mhuire a chance to gain from this programme in the future.

### 3. Linkage and Integration

#### Comhtháthú le hábhair eile

**Gaeilge:** Úsáidtear an Ghaeilge mar mhodh cumarsáide chomh minic agus is féidir agus is ceol á mhúineadh. Cleachtas dátheangach atá i gceist. Chomh maith leis sin, múintear ranna agus amhráin Gaeilge.

**Language:** As with Irish, learning a variety of songs in English exposes the children to a richness of vocabulary in a variety of styles. Latin, German, Spanish and French songs are also taught occasionally. Learning musical terms also integrates with language teaching (English and Italian).

**Mathematics:** This can be achieved through number songs and rhymes.

**History:** The teacher could focus on the development of music and instruments through the ages, the lives of famous composers or ballads about historical events.

**Geography:** Looking at the origins of instruments or music from different countries.

**P.E. Games or dance:** appreciation of various genres of music, games and dance styles.

**Religion** School choir for religious ceremonies and sacraments; Music plays an important part in Scoil Mhuire's religion programme, Alive-O.

#### Ocáidí Speisialta, Comórtais etc

- ❖ The school choir, consisting of children (from Rang a 2 to Rang a 6), prepares for and sings in both the First Communion ceremony and the Confirmation ceremony annually.
- ❖ The school regularly has a formal choir, most recently the *National Children's Choir*, which we have been affiliated with since its inception in the 1980's. All children from Rang a 5 and Rang a 6 are invited to participate. The children have benefitted greatly from the range of songs that have been taught: amhrain Ghaeilge; songs from opera, operetta, shows and oratorio; art songs, folk songs, spirituals, hymns, partner songs and rounds. Some are sung in unison and others in two- and three-parts. Last year we took part in the *Cross Boarder Orchestra Ireland Peace Proms*. It entertains, educates and engages the children in music whilst performing with a full symphony orchestra and working with leading professional musicians and conductors. It also enhances the children in qualities of self-reliance, personal integrity, responsibility and confidence and it also prepares group and individual singers for a public forum. Children from Rang a 4 and Rang a 5 took part in the *Hallelujah Choir Festival* in December 2013.
- ❖ The school choir and various classes visit the two local nursing homes in Moycullen throughout the year too.
- ❖ In 2011, Moycullen held her first ever St Patrick's Day Parade. Children from Naoínán Shóisear to Rang a 6, representing Scoil Mhuire participated through dance, music and song. We endeavour to participate annually.
- ❖ Concerts or plays are held, at least once a year, at which children perform in groups and individually, singing and playing instruments, including tin whistle which is taught in school as well as guitar and other instruments which the children learn outside school time e.g. Tommy Keane's concerts and concerts during the Féile Ealaíne, Christmas pagents in both the church or in the halla mór
- ❖ Children are given the opportunity to enjoy live performances from musical groups, orchestras etc. visiting the area, about once a year, e.g. Music in the Classroom, Barbaró, Con Tempo Music in the Schools quartet, local and national groups, parents and past-pupils to our annual Féile Ealaíne and musical events in Galway city.

#### **4. Assessment and Record Keeping**

Teacher observation is the principal assessment tool used in music.

Teacher-designed tasks and tests, projects, curriculum profiles, recording of the children's work are some of the other assessment tools used.

##### ***Teacher observation***

'Observation and recording of the children engaging in musical activities will enable the teacher to form and articulate impressions of what characterises the children's work, to monitor their progress and to ensure that each child's needs are being fulfilled. In using observations as an assessment tool the teacher should be clear about what aspect of musical behaviour he/she is expecting the pupils to demonstrate and should anticipate learning outcomes before making observations. Pupils may be observed working in groups or as individuals in the following contexts:

- listening attentively to music
- talking about what has been heard as part of a class discussion
- illustrating or writing about what has been heard
- listening to the responses of others
- moving to music
- singing a favourite song
- playing an instrument
- reading a simple rhythmic or melodic pattern
- sharing ideas for a composing activity
- selecting and organising instruments
- rehearsing a performance
- attempting to record compositions, either on tape or through invented graphic notation, simplified notation or standard notation.'

(Primary Curriculum: Music)

Other assessment tools used are

- Teacher-designed tasks
  - Recordings of the children's work
  - Graphic/pictorial scores.
- Assessment is recorded in teachers' notes and in the end of year report
  - This is communicated to parents in the end-of-year report

Each child has a music copy/folder from Rang a 2 on, in which songs and tunes for tin whistle is kept. They also have a formal music copy, to be used in particular for the Literacy strand unit. The Cuntas Míósúil includes a short evaluation of progress, as well as the areas covered monthly.

#### **5. Children with Different Needs**

It is especially the case with Music that children will come within one teaching group will have a wide range of musical backgrounds, from a good level of formal teaching outside school, to very little musical experience. A degree of flexibility in planning and preparation will be necessary as well as a readiness to use different approaches.

Differing interests, e.g. perhaps between boys and girls, should be taken into account and every effort made to keep the interest of all the children. The underlying principle here is

the recognition of each child's right to participate in and access the Music curriculum. It is the policy of our school that all children in every class will participate in and have access to music activities. Music activities will be differentiated in order to meet the needs of the children in every class. Teachers adapt and differentiate the curriculum according to the needs and talents of the children and a special-needs assistant provides support to some children if necessary/ allocated.

#### **6. Equality of Participation and Access**

Equal opportunities will be given to all children regardless of gender, ethnic background, socio-economic status across all strands and activities. The music class can be used as an opportunity to integrate the culture of all pupils e.g. international pupils.

### **■ Organisational Planning**

#### **7. Timetable**

Time is allocated as per the Primary school curriculum. In this curriculum, music is included in the time allowance for arts education. All classes have up to one hour of music per week. This time may be broken down at the discretion of the individual teacher.

In the junior classes, it is recognised that the time allocated may be of shorter duration on a more frequent basis while senior classes may divide the time into longer spans such as two thirty minute sessions or three twenty minute sessions. Teachers may also choose to block times for music at particular times of the year.

#### **8. Resources and ICT**

- A number of publications are already in use as reference for members of staff
- The local community, musicians living locally, the local arts centre and education officers, concert halls, local musical events and national musical events will all be considered as valuable resources as support for the Music Curriculum.

#### *Information and Communications Technology*

The teachers realise that the child's understanding and experience of music can be broadened and enriched in various ways through the use of ICT. Many programmes encourage active listening, musical playing and meaningful composing, and heighten the relationships between the Listening and Responding, Performing, and Composing strands. Each classroom is equipped with an I.W.B. with internet access. Teachers may use these to access useful sites to support their music programme. All classrooms are also equipped with a laptop, a P.C. if required and a C.D. player. The Infant teachers have an iPad and some other classes also have one for their use too. The Senior classes also have access to Notebooks.

CD-ROMs and the internet mean that the children have alternate opportunities to see and hear various instruments; also for exploring sound through electronic media, acquiring skills at their own rate, recording their improvisations and compositions, and reviewing their work alone or in collaboration with others.

#### *Text Books:*

In June 2013, it was decided to follow " The Right Note" music scheme from Junior Infants

to Rang a 6.

### **9. Health and Safety**

The following factors will be taken into consideration when planning for the teaching of music:

- Ventilation of the classroom
- Adequate space to be allowed for children while doing choral or instrumental work
- Adequate clear space to be allowed for children to respond to music through dance
- Care taken in transporting and accessing musical equipment and instruments
- Appropriate volume levels when using audio equipment and instruments

### **10. Individual Teachers' Planning and Reporting**

- The whole-school plan, core curriculum and the curriculum documents for music provide information and guidance to individual teachers for their long and short term planning
- Teachers plan using the objectives as laid out in the strands and strand units
- Each teacher will record their month's work in their Cuntas Miosuil which will serve in reviewing and developing the whole school plan/individual preparation for following years

### **11. Staff Development**

- Teachers have access to reference books, resource materials, instruments, equipment and websites dealing with music.
- The Music Committee will take responsibility for monitoring developments.
- Staff are consulted about the purchasing of instruments and materials for music
- Information about in-service courses, school visits, musical events are communicated to all
- Teachers are encouraged to attend in-service courses.
- We are looking at opportunities for staff with expertise in the areas of music to share their ideas with other staff members e.g. co-operative teaching.
- Time is allocated at staff meetings to discuss aspects of the music curriculum
- It would be the aim of the school plan to provide advice and help on the preparation and implementation of the music curriculum to all staff e.g. to write out a piece of music, to change the key of a piece of music, to locate pieces of music
- There are opportunities for team-teaching in music e.g. Peace Proms Choir; teachers teaching the words of PPC songs
- There are opportunities for whole school engagement with particular strands e.g. Peace Proms concert, Christmas Carol Service, Assemblies, Orchestra performance, Christmas/Nativity Plays and Pageants, St Patrick's Day parade, Sacrament Choirs, School Masses

### **12. Parental Involvement**

Parents are asked to give support to their children's music activities by encouraging active listening, discussing attitudes towards and taste in music, allowing time and space to practise or improvise on an instrument, and by encouraging positive attitudes to music in general and to school-based activities in particular. Parents are often invited to attend school or classroom music events. At times also, the Parents' Association may be involved in the organisation of workshops by visiting musicians and helping with funding for various musical projects.

### **13. Community Links**

- The local community, the local arts centre and education officers, concert halls, galleries, local musical events and national support structures will all be considered as valuable resources as support for the Music Curriculum. Teach na Gaeilge is currently used for both the Colourstrings programme and tin-whistle teaching.
- The school choir will also participate when and where required in consultation with the parish and the liturgical needs at the time.

## ■ Success Criteria

This plan will make a difference to the teaching and learning of music in our school because teachers will use it to inform their planning and teaching. The following criteria will indicate success.

- We will know that the plan has been implemented if
  - Teachers' preparation is based on this plan
  - Procedures outlined in this plan consistently followed
- Means of assessing the outcomes of the plan include
  - Teacher/parent/pupil/community feedback
  - Cuntas Miosuil
  - Inspectors' suggestions/report
- We will know if the plan has enhanced pupil learning if
  - Children have a positive attitude and appreciation of music
  - Children have an interest in expression through music
  - Children engage in listening and responding, performing and composing music
  - Children have explored sound including vocal sound, body percussion, instruments and environmental sounds
  - Children have listened and responded to music from a wide variety of genres and cultures in a variety of ways
  - Children sing songs appropriate to their vocal range from a wide variety of genres and cultures
  - Children play a variety of instruments
  - Children experience a variety of ways of recording music which may include graphic, pictorial, ICT and traditional music notation
  - Children improvise and create music using a variety of sound sources
  - Children talk about, evaluate and record their work.

## ■ Implementation

### (a) Roles and Responsibilities

The plan will be implemented and developed by the teachers, and supported by the Board of Management.

### (b) Timeframe

The content of this whole school plan for music will be fully implemented during the academic year, 2014/2015

## ■ Review

### Roles and Responsibilities/ Timeframe

- It will be necessary to review this plan as and when required to ensure optimum



implementation of the music curriculum in the school.

- The teachers and Board of Management will be involved in this review.
- All teachers on the staff will be responsible for communicating any amendments they think should be made.

### ■ **Ratification and Communication**

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management for ratification in April 2014. It will be communicated to all parents through the school website.