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Mr M McKeever  
Headteacher  
The Trinity Catholic School  
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Dear Mr McKeever

### **Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: music**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 11 and 12 October 2010 to look at work in music.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and selected students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work and audio recordings; and observation of six lessons, extra-curricular activities and an assembly for students in the lower school.

The overall effectiveness of music is good.

#### **Achievement in music**

Achievement in music is good.

- Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average. Students achieve well in all parts of the music examination, especially their performing skills. Despite a dip to below average in 2010, the proportion of students taking the GCSE music course in Years 10 and 11 is above that seen nationally.
- School data and observations in lessons confirm that students' musical experience on entry is broadly average. Students make good progress and reach above average standards by the end of Year 9. They perform confidently and many use musical vocabulary proficiently. Additional curriculum time provided for whole-class instrumental lessons, plus students' own considerable enthusiasm for music lessons, contributes significantly to their attainment.

- Music results for students in the sixth form are mixed. Following the disappointing results in 2010, when students made broadly satisfactory progress, a thorough review was undertaken. This investigated reasons why some students, in both the music and the music technology examination, did not do as well as expected. As a result, improvements have been implemented.
- Participation by all groups of students in the extensive range of ensembles that take place at lunchtime and after school is exceptional. Students' exemplary behaviour towards each other, visitors and other adults contributes significantly to their enjoyment and positive attitudes, and they thoroughly enjoy performing to many different audiences. Learning instruments is seen as the norm and many students attain high grades in instrumental examinations. Others prefer to play for enjoyment and the school encourages both approaches successfully. Students' attitude to music was summed up by the comment, 'if I hadn't had the chance to learn the violin in Year 7, I would never have thought of playing an instrument'.

### **Quality of teaching in music**

The quality of teaching in music is good.

- In the best lessons, teaching has a clear, simple focus on the musical progress that students are expected to make, with challenge well matched to the needs of individuals. Teachers bring different musical skills and expertise to lessons, and use them successfully to model music techniques and activities. Most lessons proceed at a good pace and provide appropriate challenge, which enables students to be engaged in their learning, especially when undertaking group work. Occasionally, lessons are over-directed by teachers. On these occasions, opportunities are limited for students either to contribute suggestions or make musical decisions.
- Although audio recordings are made, they are not used enough during composition work. As a result, opportunities are missed for students to use recordings, not only to help them make musical and creative improvements to their work but also to listen and learn from their mistakes and successes.
- Questioning is used regularly and mostly it is effective, especially when testing students' understanding of musical language. Resources are chosen carefully to appeal to and engage students' interests, and are also relevant to their experiences.

### **Quality of the curriculum in music**

The quality of the curriculum in music is good.

- Students in Key Stage 3 benefit significantly from the whole-class instrumental tuition provided in addition to their curriculum lessons. All students learn either the violin or the recorder and this encourages many to develop an interest in either continuing with these instruments or

learning different ones. All elements of the music curriculum are covered regularly, including singing and using computers to create music.

- The school is offering music in two option blocks this year to allow students to have more subject choices; numbers have increased and all learn in lesson time compared with previous years where some students had to study music for GCSE examination after school. The school is aware that detailed schemes of work for Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are incomplete, and only provide general overviews of the units of work to be studied. Although these ensure that the course content is covered, they do not indicate how students' musical skills and knowledge are to be developed as they prepare for examinations.
- The exceptional number and variety of music ensembles, which cater extremely well for students' differing levels of musical ability, are rightly celebrated and enjoyed by both the high number of students of all abilities involved but also by the audiences at different concerts. Despite music rooms and rehearsal facilities being cramped and scattered around the school, they are hives of musical activity outside of lesson time.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in music**

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in music is good.

- All music staff and peripatetic instrumental staff play an important role in supporting and leading some ensembles. The head of department is well informed about national music issues, reflecting well on how these may be best used within the music department. You and the head of performing arts ensure that high-quality music making is at the heart of school life and the subject therefore show very good capacity for further sustained improvements.
- Although music concerts and recitals are recognised as being important both for students and also for the profile of the school within the community, music and senior leaders ensure that these are successfully balanced by good-quality classroom provision.
- The current system used to monitor students' musical progress is under review. Opportunities are being planned for greater student evaluation of their own work and setting themselves challenges and targets to attain. The head of department is also giving active consideration to the validity and appropriateness of both the regular written assessments that are currently done every term and also the aptitude test that is carried out at the start of Year 7.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- using audio recordings as a learning tool to help students learn from their mistakes and make informed, creative choices to improve their work
- completing the detailed schemes of work for Key Stages 4 and 5
- clarifying and implementing the assessment methods used by all staff so that they can measure and track students' musical progress during different activities.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop music in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Marianne Young**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**