

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



28 October 2010

Ms J Pomeroy
Woodford County High School
High Road
Woodford Green
Essex
IG8 9JA

Dear Ms Pomeroy

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 12 and 13 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of five class lessons and three instrumental lessons.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is good.

- When they join the school in Year 7, students' starting points in music are broadly average. They make good progress during Key Stage 3 and by the end of Year 9 standards are above average. The relatively small numbers who take music at GCSE also make good progress and standards have been consistently high for many years.
- Students use classroom instruments well when performing and when creating their own music. They show good understanding of a range of musical devices, styles and genres. The most able students, especially those studying for GCSE, produce imaginative and creative work of high quality. Although some students lack confidence when singing, it is generally well controlled and tuneful.

- Large numbers take part in extra-curricular activities and learn to play musical instruments, both within and beyond the school. Not all students make as much progress as might be expected in individual instrumental tuition in school because the time allowed for lessons is too short.
- Students' personal development through music is outstanding. They respond very well in lessons and approach individual and small-group practical work in a very mature manner, cooperating very well with each other and their teachers. These attributes play a major part in the good progress that they make in lessons.
- The number of students studying music for A level is small. Students make good progress in the sixth form with results being broadly in line with national averages, despite some having not previously studied music for GCSE. Their attitudes to learning, including undertaking independent study, are good. A few students take the initiative to lead musical activities in the school but this is an area that is not currently well developed.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is good.

- Teachers and students have established very positive working relationships. Students are, therefore, confident in working independently and in small groups, and are eager to learn.
- In most lessons, teaching enables students to develop good musical understanding through active engagement in composing or performing and carefully focused listening. In a small minority of cases, however, there is too great an emphasis on acquiring knowledge about music or on the use of musical notation, without placing it within a musical context.
- Lesson planning identifies the activities to be undertaken and presents an outline of the learning objectives for the unit of work. However, it does not always identify precisely what students of different prior attainment are expected to learn. As a result, although teachers provide good feedback, students do not always know how to improve to make outstanding, as opposed to good, progress.
- Regular sound recordings are made of students' work and used to support assessments of their achievements. Assessment and record-keeping systems in Key Stage 3, while completed regularly, do not all contribute well to the evaluation of progress as outlined in the National Curriculum.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- The planned curriculum for Key Stage 3 includes a satisfactory range of musical styles, genres and activities, while that for GCSE and A level is based on the examination specifications. The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 outlines progression but does not clarify this through specifying objectives and differentiated expectations for students' achievement by the end of each unit.

- While the range of activities is broad and includes a reasonable balance between the different musical activities, insufficient opportunities are planned for students to create original, imaginative and distinctive compositions.
- Regular use is made of information and communication technology in all age groups although the range of software used does not provide sufficient opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate their creativity.
- The range of extra-curricular activities provides well for students who sing or learn an orchestral instrument. However, opportunities to involve other students with different musical interests are limited.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

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

- The school's evaluation of music has accurately recognised its strengths and identified areas for development. There has been, for example, a clear and successful focus on raising and subsequently maintaining standards in GCSE examinations.
- The school has a well-established and strong partnership with the local authority music service. Many students benefit from this through, for example, involvement in instrumental lessons and borough-wide musical activities and events. However, timetabling arrangements for instrumental lessons limit the progress made by students. Partnerships with others, such as professional musicians and organisations, are not well developed.
- The school benefits from participation in local network meetings but makes insufficient use of recent national and other initiatives, and resources, to improve provision for students. There is, however, a clear determination to develop the subject further through targeted actions such as improving the precision of curriculum planning and broadening the range of partnerships with other providers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- clarifying what students are expected to learn by:
 - developing the scheme of work, and particularly identifying aims or objectives and differentiated expectations for achievement in each unit
 - using these objectives and expectations as the basis for defining more precisely what students are expected to learn in lessons
- ensuring that all lessons focus on first-hand involvement in active music making and include more opportunities for students to explore a creative approach to composing, through using a range of resources including information and communication technology
- broadening opportunities and the quality of provision for students by:
 - increasing the range of extra-curricular activities

- making further use of resources and ideas from national and other initiatives
- establishing partnerships with other providers
- improving the arrangements for instrumental teaching, in partnership with the local authority music service.

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

David Williams
Additional Inspector