

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mrs D Mowbray-Pape
Headteacher
St Margaret's Primary School
Crossgate Peth
Durham
DH1 4QB

Dear Mrs Mowbray-Pape

Ofsted 2010–11 good practice survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 September 2010 to look at work in music and particularly the impact of the national 'wider opportunities' initiative, supported through the standards fund.

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 made included: discussions with members of staff, pupils and the local authority Music Education Manager; scrutiny of relevant documentation; observation of a Year 6 class music lesson and two small-group instrumental lessons, and a rehearsal of the school orchestra.

Features of good practice

- Before the advent of the national initiative, a good proportion of pupils were already receiving additional instrumental tuition at your school. You took the decision to use the devolved standards funding to buy additional hours from the local authority music service for small-group teaching, rather than buying in to the whole-class teaching model. As a result, all pupils in Key Stage 2 are offered the opportunity to take up an instrument, and all who express a wish to are given this opportunity. While parents are asked to make a termly contribution towards the cost of these lessons, there is a remissions policy for the few who are in receipt of free school meals. Overall, participation rates in additional instrumental tuition are now high; half of all pupils from Year 4 upwards participate, the great majority persevering throughout Years 5 and 6. Proportionally, significantly more girls than boys are involved in these

lessons and in extra-curricular music, and you recognise that further engagement of boys in musical activities is an area for development.

- Standards are clearly above average in instrumental playing and also in classroom work. The classroom curriculum is well-planned with good use of a variety of published resources adapted to meet the needs of your pupils. Pupils are encouraged to bring their instruments with them to class music lessons and their advanced skills are challenged through extension activities.
- Rightly, you recognise the significant part that extremely supportive parents play in helping those pupils who receive additional instrumental tuition to achieve well, including through encouraging regular practice at home, contributing to the cost of lessons and, not least, having good understanding of the benefits gained from participation in good-quality music education.
- One aspect of the national initiative that your staff have not been able to benefit from, partly because you have not taken the whole-class teaching 'wider opportunities' approach, is the opportunity to share practice with colleagues from the music service through shared teaching and observation. We agreed that there would be benefits for both parties from such a strategy, and also from class teachers' participation in other continuing development opportunities, including those provided through the Durham primary music teachers' network meetings.

Areas for further development

As we discussed, provision in the school could be further improved by:

- increasing the proportion of boys participating in additional instrumental lessons and extra-curricular ensembles, to match that of girls
- collaborative classroom working with instrumental music teachers to share expertise and good practice, and to develop even greater levels of musical challenge for pupils.

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

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector