

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 Girdler
Headteacher
Walton Holymoorside Primary School
Holymoorside Road
Holymoorside
Chesterfield
S42 7DU

Dear Mrs Girdler

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 19 November 2010 to look at work in music and, particularly, the impact of the national singing initiative.

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: discussions with members of staff, pupils, and the local authorities' Music Partnership Manager and Singing Support Team leader; scrutiny of relevant documentation; and observation of two class music lessons and a whole-school singing assembly.

Features of good practice

- Throughout the school, children sing with enthusiasm and enjoyment; they sing with good diction, intonation, and sense of musical phrase. Older pupils are able to hold separate vocal lines in three-part songs and younger pupils are learning to perform in ensemble through singing simple rounds.
- The Key Stage 1 and 2 music coordinators show a good understanding of how pupils make musical progress. There is an appropriate emphasis on the ongoing development of musical skills and understanding throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 with a clear focus on moving from enthusiastic participation to high-quality musical performance, particularly in singing work.
- Good use has been made of the national singing initiative resources and of the training offered as part of the 'Sing Up' programme. Although a significant number of teachers are already good musicians, participation in these courses has had a sustained impact. It has improved pupils' repertoire of songs and singing games, and has encouraged all staff to lead and participate in singing with even more confidence. However, there are still times in lessons and

rehearsals when teachers rely on verbal communication, when it would be much more effective simply to demonstrate the musical response required.

- Although not the main focus for this visit, it was interesting to hear about the 'wider opportunities' instrumental programme. Last year, around 100 students in Years 3 & 4 participated in a full year of string tuition, at no cost to the school or to students. The current Year 3 pupils have not been offered this experience, but around a third of last year's 'wider opportunities' pupils has elected to continue with the tuition at a cost of £1 per lesson to each pupil as part of the 'further opportunities' scheme. The school has elected to pass this charge directly to parents.
- Both the instrumental and singing initiatives have had a positive impact, and the 'wider opportunities' programme includes more general musicianship development. However, there is scope for greater integration of this work – for example, by using pupils' instrumental skills to accompany vocal performances.
- The school has built some strong, long-term partnerships with local choirs and instrumental ensembles. The standards achieved by the well-established Key Stage 2 choir, which currently involves 70 pupils including a fair proportion of boys, have been rightly recognised in local and national music festivals. Links with the local authorities' Music Partnership are excellent as shown, for example, by the school's close working with the Singing Support Team leader. However, links with secondary schools are not well-developed and do not promote the benefits gained by pupils through participation in the instrumental and singing initiatives, or the work done in the regular music curriculum.

Areas for further development, which we discussed, include:

- making even more effective use of teachers' musicality to model what is expected, by reducing the time spent on verbal explanations in lessons and rehearsals
- exploring how pupils' instrumental skills can integrate with and complement their vocal work
- using the Music Partnership to help develop closer links with secondary schools, particularly in promoting pupils' positive musical experiences of singing and playing instruments as a foundation for Key Stage 3.

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 sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector