

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



27 January 2011

Ms B Fagan
Headteacher
John Scurr Primary School
Cephas Street
Stepney Green
London
E1 4AX

Dear Ms Fagan

Ofsted 2010–11 good practice survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 14 January 2011 to look at work in music and particularly the impact of the national 'Wider Opportunities' and singing initiatives, 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 included: discussions with you, the music Advanced Skills Teacher (AST), pupils, the head of the Tower Hamlets Arts and Music Education Service (THAMES), and one of your community arts partners; scrutiny of relevant documentation; observation of a Year 4 'Wider Opportunities' lesson; visits to three curriculum music lessons and an instrumental lesson; and a visit to the whole-school assembly.

Features of good practice

- School leaders, including senior managers and governors, have worked hard to establish music as a central aspect of the curriculum. The school's 'Sing Up' Platinum award rightly recognises that singing permeates school life. Considerable funding is given to music by the school each year; imaginative and thoughtful solutions have been devised, overcoming barriers to participation and ensuring that music provision fits comfortably within the school's cultural and community contexts. The significant impact of pupils' participation in music on their personal and social development is clear. It is particularly commendable that pupils from all groups benefit from music. Boys and girls, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those from different ethnic backgrounds participate equally.

- Partnership working is strong. Links are well-established with THAMES, the Guildhall School of Music, the London Symphony Orchestra, and local community arts groups. Judicious use is made of the 'Sing Up' teaching resources.
- All pupils in Year 4 participate in the whole-class 'Wider Opportunities' programme, where they learn to play the recorder as well as continuing to develop other musical skills such as rhythm work and singing. This programme is offered by THAMES although the full cost, including the provision of instruments, is met by the school. A good number of pupils continue with recorder tuition after the initial 'Wider Opportunities' experience; this is taught in smaller groups. Additional tuition is available on flute, clarinet, and trumpet and is fully funded by the school, at no cost to families. At present, however, opportunities are limited for instrumentalists across the school to play in ensembles, as a band or orchestra.
- Some very effective teaching was observed during the visit. In the Year 4 lesson, rhythm and singing games, listening activities, and excellent teacher modelling were used skilfully and progressively to help pupils internalise a melody which they then performed confidently on their recorders. Exemplary leadership of the Early Years singing lesson was characterised by non-stop musical activity, pitched exactly to pupils' needs and interests, and modelling of the highest quality. In class music lessons, pupils produce confident, musically assured group compositions and enjoy evaluating their work. However, class teachers do not always make maximum use of lesson time for music-making and pupils' aural development, as they spend too much time on verbal explanation before pupils have the opportunity to engage with music.

Areas for further development

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

- encouraging class teachers to maximise the time available in curriculum lessons for active music-making or listening
- developing opportunities for pupils across the school to develop further their instrumental performance skills through regular, large ensemble rehearsals and performances.

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 the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector