

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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Miss S Ramsay
Headteacher
Uphall Primary School
Uphall Road
Ilford
Essex
IG1 2JD

Dear Miss Ramsay

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 11 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 learners; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of seven lessons and two assemblies.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- On entry to the school, standards in music are generally low. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and by the beginning of Year 1 standards are broadly average. During their remaining time in school, pupils make satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 6 standards are average. In some classes, where standards are above average, pupils make good progress but this is not consistent across the school.
- Pupils sing well with clear words and good tone quality, and perform confidently when playing instruments. When creating their own music they choose and combine different sounds but are less skilled in using the sounds expressively, for example to convey specific moods or feelings.

- Large numbers are involved in learning instruments, including in whole-class lessons on recorders, tuned percussion instruments and African drums.
- Pupils' personal development through music is good. They enjoy their music-making, are self-confident, and cooperate well with each other and their teachers.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Teachers and pupils have established very positive working relationships which provide a secure context for learning.
- While teaching was good in four of the seven lessons seen, this quality is not consistent across the school. Where teachers have secure musical knowledge they identify clearly what pupils are intended to learn, and plan well-sequenced activities that enable pupils to make good progress. In a minority of cases, however, learning objectives are not precise enough or activities do not suit the needs and aptitudes of all pupils.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers ensure that pupils are actively engaged in music-making so that they learn through first-hand experience. In others, however, too much emphasis is placed on verbal explanations.
- Teachers often provide helpful feedback to help pupils improve their work although there is some variation in how well they use this information to ensure that subsequent lessons are well matched to pupils' needs. School systems for recording pupils' achievements, matched against National Curriculum levels, are detailed and helpful. However, they do not always include information gained from lessons which are taught by teachers other than the class teacher. Recordings of pupils' work are used to help them to review their progress, but the school recognises that this aspect is underdeveloped.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is good.

- The school provides a good range of opportunities for all pupils which engages and involves them very effectively. The school's policy of ensuring that instrumental teaching is available to all pupils without charge results in large numbers receiving specialist instrumental and vocal teaching. However, pupils have fewer planned opportunities to create their own music and therefore some opportunities are lost to develop their musical understanding more fully.
- The school has established a very good range of partnerships including with the local authority music service, and with other professional musicians and organisations. Pupils, therefore, benefit from taking part in a good range of activities, including workshops, festivals and performances at prestigious large-scale venues.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

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

- The school's very clear vision for music is seen through its strong focus on ensuring that music is both accessible and affordable for all pupils. Music is also used as a key part of the school's strategy to develop other aspects, such as language development and community cohesion.
- The school's self-evaluation has identified clear priorities for action which have led to a significant broadening of provision and increased equality of opportunity. This is impacting positively on opportunities for pupils and their achievement in music. You recognise that further areas for development include extending the range of effective teaching and implementing a more coordinated approach to how information about pupils' achievements is collected, recorded and used to raise standards further and celebrate pupils' achievements.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the consistency of the quality of teaching by:
 - continuing to provide professional development opportunities that extend teachers' subject skills, knowledge and understanding
 - refining the way in which information about pupils' achievements is collected, used to help them to improve, and to inform teachers' planning
- providing more opportunities for pupils to create their own music.

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