

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



15 March 2011

Mr A Saunders
Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Walton Avenue
Penketh
Warrington
WA5 2AU

Dear Mr Saunders

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 21 and 22 February 2011 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: discussions with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; observation of four class lessons, one of which was jointly observed with you and a singing assembly for the whole school.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- Children have varied prior musical experiences of singing and using instruments when they join the school. A carefully designed mix of music activities enables children to make the progress expected of them when they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Although all aspects of music learning are covered from Years 1 to 6, leaders acknowledge that composing work, especially in Key Stage 2, is less well developed than listening and performing. Singing is a regular part of music lessons and pupils' vocal skills are developed carefully, especially during the assemblies for the whole school. The unevenness of curriculum coverage, together with some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching

across the school, results in pupils attaining broadly average standards and making broadly satisfactory progress by the end of Year 6.

- Pupils enjoy music activities - for example, helping to lead different parts when singing and the opportunities provided for all pupils to perform to different audiences. Pupils talk enthusiastically about being involved in music events and this involvement, together with the development of their cooperation and social interaction, makes a strong contribution to their personal development.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- In the best lessons, pupils are clear what they are to learn and how learning will develop what they have done previously. Pupils are encouraged and enabled to demonstrate their understanding musically and to experiment with sounds. Work is carefully organised so that it meets individual pupils' needs. Teachers use questioning successfully and lessons have a clear, simple musical focus.
- However, these features are not consistent across the school, especially in the whole-class keyboard lessons. Too often, pupils' musical creativity and their individual musical responses, in these lessons especially, are restricted. Pupils diligently complete the tasks set but do not clearly understand what they are learning. Repetition is the only way that they make progress, especially in the whole-class keyboard lessons.
- Leaders are aware that the use of audio recordings in music lessons is underdeveloped and only used to record musical events. As a result, pupils are unable to hear what they have played or sung so that they can make improvements to their work.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- Class teachers use a commercial scheme of work to assure curriculum coverage across the school in line with national requirements. In most lessons, the scheme is adapted to ensure that individual lessons meet the needs, interests and abilities of the pupils. Leaders have chosen to enhance classroom music lessons with whole-class keyboard lessons taught through the 'Wider Opportunities' initiative funded by the government and provided by the local authority. Evidence suggests that although pupils generally enjoy learning the keyboard and many now have their own instrument, the teaching and curriculum approach in these lessons is too rigid and does not take account of pupils' individual needs or their prior experiences in music.
- Class music activities are complemented by whole-school opportunities and those to perform with other schools within the Borough. A reasonable

number of pupils are involved in individual instrumental lessons both within and out of school time.

- Leaders recognise that currently pupils do not have any computer programs to use so that they have alternate sound sources to explore. They are actively investigating and considering suitable ones for use in the classroom.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

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

- Since September 2010, you have been responsible for coordinating the subject. Discussions indicated an awareness of the strengths but also what needs to be done to improve music provision. The decision to increase the amount of external whole-class teaching is indicative of the financial commitment given to music by leaders and governors, although you also recognise the need to consider more carefully the effectiveness of this provision. Information from external meetings, especially those linked to national music initiatives, is used well during staff meetings in order to improve teachers' practice.
- All pupils are given the chance to be involved in musical activities, such as productions, celebrations and instrumental lessons. Any barriers which might prevent this are removed so that pupils are able to have a similar musical experience.
- Leaders recognise that the current system for assessing pupils' progress is underdeveloped and not always used effectively when planning lessons. This, together with ensuring that pupils' musical skills are developed systematically so that they make better than satisfactory progress, are key priorities for improvement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- obtaining good teaching by:
 - ensuring that pupils are clear what they are to learn in all lessons
 - enabling pupils to experiment with sounds and make their own musical decisions
 - using audio recordings to enable pupils to listen to their work in lessons
- improving the curriculum by:
 - ensuring that pupils' musical skills are developed systematically as they move through the school, especially during the whole-class keyboard lessons
 - considering the use of computer programmes as an alternative way for pupils to create and control sounds

- strengthening leadership and management by:
 - using an assessment system that enables teachers to record pupils' musical strengths and weaknesses and the progress that they have made.

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

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector