

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



17 May 2011

Mrs W Douglas
Headteacher
St Basil's Catholic Primary School
Hough Green Road
Widnes
Cheshire
WA8 4SZ

Dear Mrs Douglas

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 5 May 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 five lessons; and performances by the choir and some members of the Year 5 guitar groups. During the visit, the Early Years Foundation Stage class was unavailable because of a school trip.

The overall effectiveness of music is good.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is good.

- Pupils make good progress in all areas of music learning and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. Vocal work, especially part singing, is undertaken confidently. Diction is clear and pupils listen carefully to each other so that harmonies are secure.
- A similar number of boys and girls from all groups have individual instrumental lessons. Although more girls than boys take part in extra-curricular ensembles, the additional music activities available in the playground at break times attract both boys and girls. Pupils confidently lead music activities and share their musical talents with each other through instrumental and dance activities. These popular events, together

with the formal concerts and productions ensure that pupils explore and become familiar with different musical styles and traditions.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is good.

- The very best teaching is well planned and shows a good understanding of pupils' individual musical capabilities. Consequently, all pupils are given work that challenges them appropriately and the musical purpose of the lesson is clear. Pupils are expected and allowed to make musical decisions through discussions and experimentation, with the teacher providing some musical modelling at times. As a result, the quality of the pupils' work is above average and they make rapid progress. This was evident where Year 6 pupils, in a short time, produced vocal harmonies, chords and percussion accompaniments to enhance the melody of 'Mamma Mia'.
- However, these features are not present in all lessons. Although teachers maintain pupils' interest in music, some sessions are too teacher-led with pupils' first responses accepted too readily giving them limited chances to experiment and improve their work.
- Teachers provide helpful and supportive comments to pupils in lessons. However, formal assessments of their musical progress and knowledge are mainly undertaken at the end of an activity and audio recordings are underused in helping pupils understand how to improve their work.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is good.

- The curriculum reflects all aspects of music learning although the use of computer programs as additional sound sources is limited. Music lessons are generally planned into the overall theme for each year group and commercial schemes are used by some teachers to provide guidance and ideas. Leaders recognise that some teachers are more adept than others at adapting these materials; consequently, at times, not all ability levels are catered for as well as they might.
- Additional music activities are a regular feature of school life; opportunities are taken regularly to involve pupils in competitions and music events out of school. These significantly enhance the school's musical profile within the local community. Recently, a song composed by pupils won a competition, organised by Oxfam, to highlight the issues of discrimination and injustice. The singing and dialogue in this recording were clear, demonstrating and enhancing pupils' musical abilities and their self-confidence.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

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

- The subject leader provides good leadership and support. She is a capable musician, who is reflective and well informed about national music developments and how these can be used to drive future developments. An audit of teachers' capabilities is being used to inform and provide training and this help is welcomed by those who find teaching music challenging. You have clear expectations of the subject leader and the regular analysis and reports identify clearly the strengths and weaknesses in music provision. Leaders give good support so that music can develop successfully and include all pupils. These strengths reflect and support good capacity for improvement.
- The whole-class guitar teaching for pupils in Year 5, provided by the local authority, is enabling the class teachers to develop their instrumental skills along with the pupils. Although this programme was not observed directly during the visit, other evidence and discussion with the subject leader indicate that weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum are evident. These were identified by the school before the inspection.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that the best practice is shared with all staff, especially how to provide appropriate challenges for more able pupils
 - using audio recordings regularly as a means of helping pupils to understand how to improve their work
- refining the current assessment method used by noting individual pupils' achievements regularly, so that this information can be used appropriately to plan their next steps in music learning.

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