

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



29 June 2011

Ms G Fox
Headteacher
Kings Norton Girls' School and Language College
Selly Oak Road
Birmingham
West Midlands
B30 1HW

Dear Ms Fox

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 13 and 14 June 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; observation of three lessons, two of which were jointly observed with you, and extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of music is inadequate. There are significant weaknesses in the curriculum provision for students in Years 7 to 9, and in the leadership and management of music. Consequently, these students do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is inadequate.

- By the end of Year 9, students reach only broadly average standards, especially in performing. Given their attainment when they join the school, this represents inadequate progress. The lack of singing work restricts students' progress in this important aspect of the curriculum. Although composition is taught regularly, students' work is over-directed and their individuality and creativity are restricted.
- The proportion of students taking GCSE music in Year 11 is above average. There are particular strengths in the performance aspect of the

course, with these students also reaching high grades in their Associated Board examinations. Overall, however, standards reached are broadly average, with no A* grades attained and students do less well in music than they do in other subjects.

- Most students who study music in Year 12 continue to A2 level in Year 13. However, they do not always translate their attainment as demonstrated in their GCSE grades into the expected A-level grades at the end of Year 13, and this represents inadequate progress for these students.
- A good proportion of students are involved in individual instrumental lessons and ensembles. External performances are very popular. These events are well received by parents and carers and significantly help to raise the profile of music and develop students' social skills.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is inadequate.

- Students are given a written test intended to assess musical aptitude when they join the school. Information from this is used to select students for additional instrumental tuition. However, together with other regular written music tests at the end of units, this initial information is not used sufficiently to plan lessons which meet students' individual needs and abilities especially at Key Stage 3.
- The best lessons include a simple focus on the musical progress students are expected to make. Some modelling of music techniques and activities is undertaken in some lessons. Resources are chosen carefully to appeal to students' interests and personal experiences. However, too often, lessons are over-directed by the teachers, with excessive written instructions and use of worksheets which confine learning and restrict students' individuality and creativity. Although recordings are made in some lessons, in too many the lack of these mean that students are unable to listen to their work and use this information to make musical improvements. Despite this, students work well together, generally enjoy lessons and do their best to complete the tasks set.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is inadequate.

- The curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9 does not meet statutory requirements as students are unable to use information and communication technology (ICT) in their lessons. Currently, too much emphasis is given to developing students' instrumental performing skills. Singing does not feature regularly in lessons. The commercial scheme used has not been adapted sufficiently to ensure that students' musical skills and understanding are developed systematically.
- A broad overview indicates what is to be taught in the sixth form and in Years 10 and 11. This ensures that the main points of the syllabus are covered, but it does not indicate how additional material is to be included

to ensure that lessons meet students' needs and that students make better progress.

- A number of high-quality ensembles rehearse out of lesson time, and these are well attended. Crowded accommodation and lack of instrumental storage space make it difficult for large ensembles to rehearse regularly. Nevertheless, students very much welcome the opportunity to perform and work with professional musicians.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is inadequate.

- Although music staff have conversations after the examination results are published, for example, about the lack of A* grades and results in the GCSE listening paper, review and adaptation of the curriculum and lesson content is insufficient to raise attainment and ensure that students make the progress of which they are capable.
- Insufficient use is made of students' music learning and involvement in music activities before they join the school.
- There is not enough monitoring of the effectiveness of current provision and, as a result, the subject development plan does not clearly indicate how the proposed activities will impact on students' attainment.
- Discussions during the inspection indicated that senior leaders recognise the current significant weaknesses in music provision. Although improvements are planned, they have not yet been put in place.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the schemes of work for all year groups are revised so that:
 - students' musical skills are developed regularly and progressively as they move through the school
 - all parts of the music curriculum are equally represented, especially ensuring that provision for singing and ICT meets statutory requirements
- improving the quality of teaching and raising students' attainment by:
 - using assessment information to plan appropriate activities that meet students' differing needs and abilities
 - using recordings regularly so that students can assess their own work and understand and identify how it can be improved
 - ensuring that the use of worksheets is kept to a minimum so that students' creativity and own musical decisions are evident in lessons
- securing improvements in leadership and management by:
 - clearly identifying priorities for development that have measurable impact on students' achievement

- implementing a consistent approach to assessing students' progress.

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