

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



5 July 2011

Mr N Matthias  
Headteacher  
The Emmbrook School  
Emmbrook Road  
Wokingham  
Berkshire  
RG41 1JP

Dear Mr Matthias

### **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 14 and 15 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: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of eight lessons, instrumental tuition and an extra-curricular activity.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

### **Achievement in music**

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- For the past three years, standards at GCSE have varied although in each year students have made broadly satisfactory progress. The department's assessments suggest much better results this year than last. Currently, in Year 11, many students are confident and proficient performers. They use the skills and knowledge gained through learning one or more instruments to good effect in their compositions. This is also the case in the sixth form, where standards have also improved to broadly average.
- Key aspects of musical vocabulary run as a thread through units of work in Key Stage 3. Consequently, students have an adequate grasp of musical knowledge which they apply to their practical work. They make better

progress performing on instruments and composing than in singing because this is not covered in the same depth as the other aspects.

- The proportion of students participating in additional instrumental lessons is satisfactory. Students are not as well involved in extra-curricular activities. Take-up for the choirs is reasonable but few opportunities exist for students who learn instruments to participate in music ensembles because the two breaks are too short to enable students to tune, warm up and achieve a successful musical outcome in the time available. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those eligible for free school meals are not as involved in either instrumental lessons or extra-curricular activities as other groups represented in the school.

### **Quality of teaching in music**

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Music lessons are well organised and relationships are consistently good. Lessons routinely involve a balance of performing and composing as well as opportunities to listen and respond to music, including other students' performances. Occasionally, teachers attempt to cover too much in the lesson which restricts the opportunity to work in more depth, to maximise musical learning.
- Questions are used well by teachers to prompt students' recall of facts about music, or relevant musical vocabulary. Questioning strategies are not used as well to develop aural awareness. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to repeat recorded excerpts or to perform themselves, to help students correct misconceptions and encourage critical listening.
- The department has an effective and consistent approach to assessing students' learning. Helpful written feedback is provided for students at the end of units in Key Stage 3. Students taking GCSE also receive good support to help them identify pointers for improvement and they particularly value the one-to-one tutorials offered by department staff.

### **Quality of the curriculum in music**

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- At Key Stage 3, musical skills and knowledge are developed systematically as students move through the key stage. Units of work are planned so that clear links are made between the different areas of music: performing, composing and listening. Provision for information and communication technology is satisfactory but singing is a much weaker area.
- The curriculum plans in Key Stage 3 are not always sufficiently challenging for students who already have a good level of musical understanding acquired through instrumental or vocal tuition, either privately or through the school.
- Curriculum plans support students' awareness of different musical cultures satisfactorily. Students in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form appreciate the

fact that teachers are open to a wide variety of music, from varying styles and traditions.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in music**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- The department runs smoothly and is well organised. The head of department leads by example and sets a clear direction. Evaluation is used appropriately to review effectiveness and set priorities. For example, appropriate changes have been made to support students' learning at transition from GCSE to A level and greater focus has been given to technical studies and composition at A level. The revised approaches are contributing to students' improving standards and progress.
- The head of department has benefited from a range of professional development opportunities. These have had an impact on improving provision. Building better links with primary schools has rightly been identified as an area for improvement. The information from primary schools, as to which pupils have received vocal or instrumental tuition, is not used to full effect to guide curriculum plans in Year 7 and improve achievement for the more able musicians.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- ensuring that singing receives more prominence in Key Stage 3 plans and is a more regular part of lessons
- building links with primary schools to determine students' abilities on entry and making full use of the information to ensure that expectations are sufficiently high in Key Stage 3 for the more able students
- working with the senior leadership team to explore opportunities for extra-curricular clubs for instrumentalists
- encouraging more students from under-represented groups to participate in extra-curricular music and instrumental tuition.

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

**Margaret Dickinson**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**