

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



31 May 2012

Mrs Jo Djora
Headteacher
Knutsford School
Knutsford Avenue
Watford
Hertfordshire
WD24 7ER

Dear Mrs Djora

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 30 April and 1 May 2012, 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, analysis of pupils' work and observation of seven lessons, a singing assembly for pupils in Key Stage 1, the choir rehearsal, individual instrumental tuition and a whole-class cornet lesson taught as part of the Wider Opportunities initiative. A meeting was also held with a representative from Hertfordshire Music Service.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- During the Early Years Foundation Stage, children enjoy a range of musical games and singing and make the progress expected for their age. By the end of Year 6, pupils make broadly satisfactory progress and reach standards that are below expectations in some aspects of music learning. Pupils cooperate well with each other in lessons but due to limited opportunities provided to create and develop their music ideas, this aspect of their learning is less well developed. Similarly, during singing lessons, pupils do not always sing in tune or with rhythmic accuracy when accompanied by backing tracks. Those pupils who have individual instrumental lessons do well in their external examinations.

- Participation in the wide range of extra-curricular music activities and instrumental tuition is good. Senior leaders provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to perform and to take part in different activities. Pupils in the Rock Group play with rhythmic accuracy and enjoy making music together. The school choir includes pupils from different groups.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Lessons generally contain a practical element. Pupils' work is assessed regularly but teachers make insufficient use of this information in some lessons. As a result, expectations are not high enough and pupils of all abilities, particularly those who are more able, are given similar work to do. Some teachers undertake modelling, enabling pupils to understand what they have to do. Pupils do show good behaviour in lessons and enthusiasm for music but too often they are not able to contribute their own ideas.
- A specialist part-time teacher teaches alongside class teachers and leads lessons for pupils in Key Stage 2. Another teacher from Hertfordshire Music Service is employed to teach whole-class cornet lessons for pupils in Year 3. Teaching from these specialist teachers lacked pace and structure, with too much teacher-talk; pupils' musical abilities were not considered sufficiently.
- Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently, and are able to make informed musical decisions when manipulating and changing sounds. However, they are unable to develop their pieces beyond a basic level because they lack clear understanding about the characteristics of different musical styles, for example, a waltz or folk music.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- Teachers use a range of materials when planning lessons so the music activity is relevant for each year group and all parts of the music curriculum are covered. However, their overall progress is hampered by a lack of shared understanding throughout the school about the way that pupils' musical skills develop systematically as they move from Year 1 to Year 6.
- For several years, all pupils in Year 3 have received cornet lessons as part of the Wider Opportunities programme. As a result, of being involved in this programme, a number of pupils have continued to learn the cornet or other music instruments. However, insufficient regard is given to ensure that this programme links to previous and other music-curriculum lessons for these pupils.
- Pupils value the different opportunities that they have to perform regularly during assemblies and end-of-term concerts as well as within the local community.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- Senior leaders are very clear about the value of music within the school and for individual pupils. You successfully encourage and facilitate participation in music for all pupils and encourage all staff to teach lessons. You recognise that the team-teaching approach, where the music specialist works alongside class teachers, currently in operation, is curbing teachers' development, confidence and ability to lead music lessons successfully.
- The subject leader monitors the subject regularly but does not use this information to evaluate provision and consider how the quality of music can be improved. The subject development plan lacks clear timescales and targets for pupils' musical attainment.
- The school works effectively with instrumental teachers from Hertfordshire Music Service and some privately employed teachers. However, senior leaders and members of the music service acknowledge that the lack of regular lesson monitoring has limited their awareness of weaknesses in the Wider Opportunities lessons.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the overall quality of teaching, both in class lessons and in whole-class instrumental lessons by:
 - using information about pupils' musical capabilities to plan lessons that raise teachers' expectations and ensure that pupils' individual needs are met, especially for those who are more able
 - enabling pupils to demonstrate their musical understanding regularly and to develop their own ideas when creating music
- reviewing the music curriculum so that:
 - pupils' musical progress in different musical activities and lessons is developed systematically as they move through the school
 - the whole-class instrumental teaching within Year 3 develops pupils' prior music learning as well as their current music lessons
- ensuring that regular monitoring is clearly evaluated and appropriate targets are set so that provision and pupils' progress can be measured.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop music in the school.

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector