

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)



20 June 2012

Sir A Macdonald  
Headteacher  
Morpeth School  
Portman Place  
London  
E2 0PX

Dear Sir Alasdair,

### **Ofsted 2012–13 good practice survey inspection programme: music**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 25 May 2012 to look at work in music and particularly the impact of your partnership work with professional music organisations and the Tower Hamlets Arts and Music Education Service (THAMES).

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting, including the forthcoming report on music education partnerships, commissioned as part of the National Plan for Music Education. 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; meetings with partners from Serious/BT River of Music, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and THAMES; a meeting with the headteacher of Globe Primary School; and observation of two Year 8 lessons.

### **Features of good practice**

- Fundamental to the success of music at Morpeth School are the outstanding partnerships that have been built within the school community. Your strong, principled leadership has given resources, time and great encouragement for music. Responsibilities are shared among the music department staff, and administrative support provided so that a firm, thoughtful focus can be given to the quality of musical teaching and learning. Working relationships between staff and students are outstanding and, as importantly, the school has gained the trust and support of parents and carers. Consequently, barriers to participation have been overcome and students from all groups and all backgrounds enjoy participating in music.

- Strong, sustained partnerships with feeder primary schools build on students' experiences of music in Key Stage 2 and help to give them confidence when they transfer to secondary school. Participation in the annual 'Globetown' project at the Barbican Centre has been particularly successful in building and cementing these partnerships.
- Over 400 students – more than a third of the school population – benefit from additional instrumental or vocal tuition, which is provided free of charge to all. This is exceptional. Although the majority of lessons are taught by teachers employed directly by the school, good links are in place with THAMES including funding for students to attend the Saturday morning music programme and participate in local performance events.
- A strong programme of regular curriculum and extra-curricular music activities is at the heart of the department's work. Morpeth is a Musical Futures Champion School, and the successful application of this approach does much to engage students in learning. Teaching is authoritative and musical, yet also encourages student autonomy. Much more emphasis is given to popular and world-music traditions than to Western art-music styles; while it is positive that this approach encourages participation and inclusion, students' cultural understanding could potentially be broadened further through more regular experience of the classical music tradition.
- Excellent management leads to judicious selection of external partnerships to complement school-based provision. The school is fortunate to be close to national arts centres and have good access to professional musicians, but the success of partnership working is down to much more than geographical location. These partnerships have been sustained over a number of years. It is clear that the way in which projects are planned, led and managed has led both to long-term benefits for students and learning development for the music professionals. Links with institutions in South Africa, Spain and the United States have also enhanced students' learning. Undoubtedly, involvement in music has significantly raised the aspirations of students and the whole-school community.

**Areas for further development, which we discussed, include:**

- deepening students' cultural understanding through increasing their regular experience of Western art-music styles
- sharing outstanding partnership practice with other schools and academies locally and nationally, particularly the importance of strong internal working partnerships and links with parents and carers.

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.

Yours sincerely

**Mark Phillips**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**