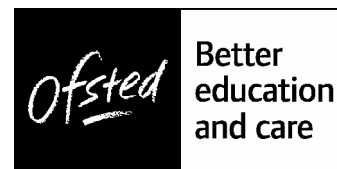


Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



17 January 2007

Ms Withers
Headteacher
Wren Spinney Community Special School
Westover Road
off Westhill Drive
Kettering
Northamptonshire
NN15 7LB

Dear Ms Withers

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on Thursday 07 December 2006. At the end of the inspection I fed back my judgements and this letter is to confirm my findings.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the extent to which every pupil is benefiting from your music provision. It also explored the links you have developed with other schools and agencies, such as the local Music Service.

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 unless to highlight exceptional practice. In such circumstances the school would be contacted prior to publication to agree the exact wording. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with members of staff, scrutiny of relevant documentation, talking with pupils and observation of lessons and other activities.

The overall effectiveness of music is good.

Achievement

Achievement is good overall.

- Pupils make good progress over time. Pupils who are verbal are able to sing along to an accompaniment and know most of the words to well

known songs and choruses. Pupils with more severe difficulties respond well to the stimulus of sound by shaking or hitting an instrument, stilling and listening or rocking to the beat.

- Music makes a very significant contribution to the emotional and personal development of the pupils through the curriculum and its use throughout the day.
- Pupils are very comfortable performing to each other and to the whole school.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- In the lessons observed, all teachers were confident in teaching music.
- Learning is enhanced by good piano accompaniments to singing, the effective use of backing tracks and a visiting musician who provides a wide range of enriching experiences for the pupils.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are very skilled at adapting approaches and equipment to meet individual needs to enable pupils to participate as fully as they can. Pupils are encouraged to be as independent as possible in their choice and use of instruments.
- Some pupils are able to sing and play an instrument in time, and do so with enthusiasm. These pupils would benefit from more specific teaching on how to improve the quality of their performance.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

The overall quality of the curriculum and extra-curricular provision is good.

- The curriculum is appropriate for pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. However, it is not clear how the school ensures that experiences and skills are built on systematically. The curriculum is not explicitly linked to the five Every Child Matters outcomes.
- The time allocation indicated for music lessons in the curriculum plan is insufficient to deliver a cohesive programme. However, observations suggest that more time is given to music than indicated.
- A good range of classroom instruments promotes engagement and a wide range of experiences. Good use is made of CDs and backing tracks to support the teaching of music.
- Pupils are all engaged in making music in class, moving from individual engagement towards more co-operative group activity. Individual preferences are valued but pupils are all encouraged to listen and respond to a wide range of musical styles.
- Music is used widely and effectively in other curriculum areas to support learning or indicate a change of activity or mood.
- Extra curricular opportunities are available to all pupils, including the Karaoke club and a programme of visiting musicians. The school is

currently exploring the possibility of starting an after school choir with a local mainstream school.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good overall.

- There is a very evident commitment to music from the senior management team. Music pervades the ethos of the school.
- The subject leader, although not a music specialist, provides good support and advice to teachers in the school. Specific training has not been offered but the school has a well established peer support and observation programme for developing staff skills. Specific training is planned on the use of the Optimusic resource.
- The school has done very well in utilising its own resources to develop music thus far and has a clear vision for how music could be developed further.
- The school has received little support or information from the local music service to date. Little relevant music training has been offered to special schools. The school was not aware of the Key Stage 2 vocal and instrumental programme or whether this was operating in their feeder special school. To be fully effective, the review of the curriculum and further development of music provision at the school require more specialist advice and the involvement of the local music service.

Subject issues: Data collection and partnerships

Data collection and partnerships are adequate.

- Pupil progress is monitored and recorded well against P level prior attainment and photographic records of pupils' musical experiences are built up over time. However, this paper-based system does not capture the musical progress a pupil has made or the skills they have developed. Audio recordings are made occasionally but there is no systematic approach to making audio/visual diaries which demonstrate improvement in a pupil's skills or interaction with music over time.
- Partnerships are developing with the feeder special school and local mainstream schools but these are not formalised or strategically planned. These have been mainly instigated by Wren Spinney School in response to identified needs.

Inclusion

Inclusion in music is good.

- Inclusion is an integral part of the school ethos and all pupils have access to the musical opportunities available. Any pupils who wish to can attend the karaoke club.

- The school is not aware of any inclusive opportunities arranged by the local music service whereby pupils from special schools can perform alongside mainstream schools in a centrally organised event.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to develop a systematic approach to making audio/visual diaries which demonstrate improvement in a pupil's interaction with music or the development of musical skills
- to review and further develop the curriculum to ensure that experiences and skills are built on systematically over time and that activities are linked to the Every Child Matters outcomes
- to seek specialist advice and support from the local music service, or elsewhere, to ensure that planning for the future development of music is effective, especially in relation to the introduction of instrumental teaching in the school and in achieving specialist school status
- to further develop and formalise partnerships with other schools and the local authority to extend provision and promote inclusive practice.

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

A copy of this feedback will be sent to your local authority and will be available to the next institutional inspection team and will be published.

In 6-12 months after the inspection visit, we would like to gather information on the impact of this inspection on the improvements in this subject in your school. To this end you may be contacted by telephone or sent a questionnaire to complete. We appreciate your co-operation in this evaluation.

Yours sincerely

Anita Wade
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools