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Mr J Nicholls  
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Dear Mr Nicholls

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme 2006/7 – Music and religious education (RE)

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality, and that of your staff and students, during my visit and that of John Rudge on 29 and 30 January 2007. At the end of the inspection we fed back our judgements and this letter is to confirm our findings.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of music, the visit had a particular focus on the extent to which every pupil is benefiting from your music provision. In particular, it sought to explore the links you may have developed with other schools and agencies, such as the local Music Service or other professional musicians, in order to improve continuity and increase opportunity for all your pupils. In RE, the visit had a particular focus on the implementation and impact of the Norfolk agreed syllabus for RE.

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.

## Music

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, observation of four lessons and one extra-curricular activity.

The overall effectiveness of music is good. The department is making a strong and distinctive contribution to the school through its commitment to providing high quality music making.

### Achievement and standards

Overall achievement and standards are good.

- Standards at GCSE have been consistently above average in recent years, albeit with small numbers of students entered. The increasing numbers now opting for music at Key Stage 4 is a measure of the improving provision for music.
- Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are accurate and indicate just above average standards. Students are able to demonstrate some imaginative and well structured compositions, and the best are both original and written in a coherent musical style.
- Performance skills vary more widely, but are above average overall at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Keyboard skills and singing skills are generally lower than other performance skills.
- At all levels, students have good listening skills and use their secure understanding of the musical elements to make informed and thoughtful appraisals of each other's work. In all classes, and particularly in the GCSE class, students' use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently to compose and structure their musical ideas.
- Students' personal development is good. Behaviour in class is always considerate and students have a mature and responsible attitude to their learning. They relish the opportunities given to work on their own or in groups and appreciate the trust given to them. Students enthusiastically join in the range of clubs and enrichment activities and many take up opportunities to learn a musical instrument. Music makes a strong and distinctive contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is good.

- The atmosphere in lessons is characterised by trust and good relationships. *"The highlight of the week"* was how one student described music lessons. Teaching is confident and based on a secure understanding of how students' learn. High expectations and a strong

focus on practical work ensure good progress. Students listen carefully, answer questions willingly and work purposefully on their own or in small groups. Students commented that they appreciate the opportunity to be creative and work independently. While they are expected to sort problems out on their own, they know that effective support and guidance are always at hand.

- Sometimes the lack of insistence on proper keyboard technique with the younger students is a barrier to more rapid and sustained progress. In addition, planning is not always sharply focused on what students of different abilities will know and understand by the end of the lesson.
- In lessons, on-going assessment and feedback is most helpful in informing students how they might improve. Each project is assessed using the school's agreed procedures, and students are given National Curriculum levels at the end of year during Years 7 to 9 to indicate overall progress.

### Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is well balanced, although opportunities for students to develop their singing are limited. The use of ICT to support students' composing work has improved significantly since the last inspection, and is now good. There is a good range of extra curricular activities and students enthusiastically take up the opportunities offered.

### Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- You and your deputy headteacher provide good leadership and a supportive framework for music. The department runs smoothly, and arrangements for the large numbers of students learning instruments from visiting teachers are well managed.
- Departmental documentation is adequate given the nature and size of the department and programmes of study meet statutory requirements. Although there is no formal self review of its work, the department knows itself well and is clear about the way forward.

### Subject issues

- Students' academic guidance is good. Individual students are known very well, and assessment data is used effectively to plan carefully for individual needs.
- Although the school has good links with its partner primary schools, these are more limited in relation to music. As a result, progression in music through the transition from primary to secondary school is not assured. The school has good links with the county music service and a

good proportion of students are learning instruments with their support.

## Inclusion

- There is a good climate of care and support, and the department's commitment to inclusion is good.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- extending curricular opportunities for students to sing
- developing closer musical links with partner primary schools to ensure greater continuity.

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

## Religious Education

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE is good with a number of outstanding features. However, there is insufficient provision for some students to meet the requirements of the Key Stage 4 programmes of study in the Norfolk agreed syllabus.

## Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good overall.

- Students make good progress from an average base at the beginning of Key Stage 3, so that by the end of Year 9 most are working at levels in line with expectations in the Norfolk agreed syllabus, and a few beyond.
- Progress in Key Stage 4 is very good for those students following the GCSE full course, nearly half the cohort. Students are well-motivated and very well taught and, as a result, the proportion achieving A\* to C grades is well above the national average.
- However the achievement of students not taking GCSE at Key Stage 4 is inadequate due to very limited curriculum provision.
- Pupils have a very positive attitude to their learning in RE and value the challenge it provides to their thinking and their own personal development.

## Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

- The quality of planning, the breadth and depth of teachers' subject knowledge and understanding, the exemplary use of ICT, the quality of questioning, and management of discussion all contribute to very effective learning. There is an enquiring and reflective atmosphere in the classroom and a high level of challenge in lessons. Students respond in kind with their contributions to discussion and commitment to learning.
- Good progress has been made with integrating a programme of assessment for learning into supporting pupils' development, so that there is now a growing awareness among students of the level at which they are working and what they need to do to improve. In Key Stage 4 GCSE students know their target grades and how they can progress further. Written work is marked carefully and supportively.

## Quality of the RE curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good for most students however it is not fully compliant with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus at Key Stage 4.

- Key Stage 3 and the Key Stage 4 GCSE courses meet statutory requirements, and provide a relevant and challenging programme.
- The Key Stage 3 course provides an effective and balanced learning programme through the study of selected religions and contemporary issues.
- The department is in the process of developing effective strategies of assessment for learning, using the relevant level descriptors, as a means for targeting teaching to the differing abilities of students.
- Pupils not taking GCSE do not receive an adequate provision for RE.

## Leadership and management

The leadership and management are good.

- The subject is very well led by an able and experienced head of department.
- The department's self evaluation is accurate and forward-looking.
- The strengths of the department's leadership are seen in the quality and balance of planning, in the deployment of resources, in the mentoring and support for non-specialists, and in the overall quality of teaching which enthuses students in their learning.
- The school is well aware of the need to develop a more effective programme for all students in Key Stage 4, and is working towards resolving this issue.

## The implementation of the agreed syllabus

Effective steps have been taken to integrate the school's scheme of work in RE with the requirements of the Norfolk agreed syllabus. Particular attention has been given to mapping the areas of study and chosen religions with those set out in the agreed syllabus, and bringing learning in Key Stage 3 into line with the relevant level descriptors.

## Inclusion

The department has a very good overall policy for inclusion, particularly in terms of ensuring that all students across the full ability range are supported in their learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- bringing the provision for all students in Key Stage 4 into line with the requirements of the Norfolk agreed syllabus for RE
- continuing to develop an effective programme of assessment for learning in RE to support the use of level descriptors and to target learning.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop RE in the 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 on Ofsted's website. In the case of RE, a copy will also be sent to the Norfolk SACRE.

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

Tony Shield  
Additional Inspector