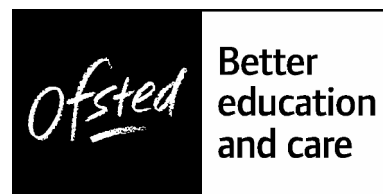


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15 December 2006

Mr Grimshaw
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Grimshaw

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 04 and 05 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 and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons and extra curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of music is good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good overall.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in Key Stage 3. They join the school with a wide range of previous attainment and achieve broadly in

line with national expectations by the end of the key stage. Pupils have a well developed musical vocabulary and make competent use of the keyboards. However, while most pupils make good progress there are not enough opportunities for more able pupils to develop and demonstrate the higher levels of attainment.

- Attainment in Key Stage 4 has improved and is above the national average. The size of the examination groups has increased over the last few years although there are fewer pupils in the current Year 10. Pupils make good progress within the examination requirements in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- There are good standards of performance in instrumental lessons and in extra-curricular activities, for example in the jazz band.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Pupils speak highly of the very good relationships between staff and pupils and of the enthusiastic commitment of the music staff. Excellent use of a workbook helps pupils understand key musical vocabulary and recall previous work. Tasks are always clear but some learning objectives are too broad. Most pupils are being helped to make good progress but all need more explicit knowledge of the level of work they are achieving and what they need to do to improve their work further. Some pupils feel that extension tasks do not always enable them to develop, and be given credit for, higher levels of achievement.
- Preparation for external examinations is extremely thorough although some opportunities were missed for pupils to learn from listening to music. In a similar way, some teaching in Key Stage 3 did not give enough emphasis to starting from the sound so that, for example, pupils placed chords into a sequence without hearing them first. This made it difficult for them to compose pleasing melodies and limited their engagement and enjoyment.
- Pupils learn well in instrumental lessons and the college is giving appropriate consideration to exploring the extent to which shared lessons could enable even greater and broader progress and encourage more to get involved in the extra-curricular activities. The balance of fun and challenge in the extra-curricular activities is excellent.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- While there is good teaching and learning in the curriculum provided, there is an insufficient range of instruments in the classroom and not enough opportunity for pupils to use information and communication

technology (ICT). The use of ICT in music is important as it enables some pupils to make much greater progress.

- The college is aware that the workbook would benefit from updating and refining so that, for example, the learning objectives in each unit of work are directly linked to the opportunities for pupil self-assessment. Appropriate thought is also being given to broadening the range of options at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- Excellent use is being made of music in the English department and by art and design teachers but no link has been made to the music curriculum. A real opportunity for exciting and effective cross-curricular work is being missed.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good overall.

- The music department is managed well by the head of department and good policies frame the work of the music team. Good registers are kept of instrumental lessons and the workbook provides an excellent structure for the curriculum work.
- The second in department takes over as head of department at the end of term when the current head of department leaves to take up promotion in another school. The capacity to maintain and improve the music provision is good and clear and well chosen priorities have already been identified.
- Excellent support is given by the college for pupils to learn a musical instrument. However, while senior managers are rightly proud of the quality of public performances, insufficient emphasis has been given to ensuring music links effectively with the other arts subjects and to maximising the broader contribution of music to the whole college. This is surprising given the arts status of the college.
- Senior managers are aware that time is needed for the new head of department to develop the curriculum, to support the new member of the team and to increase links with other subjects. There is a clear recognition that the potential contribution of music to the college has yet to be maximised fully.

Subject issues: Data collection and partnerships

- Good records are kept of instrumental lessons and attendance at extra-curricular activities. However, there is insufficient collection, analysis and effective use of information about pupils' prior learning and involvement in these musical experiences to ensure the provision is appropriate for all pupils. The collection and use of data on pupils' musical progress are at an early stage of development and there is insufficient recording of pupils' work.
- Partnerships with others are satisfactory overall. There are good links with the music service and developing links with other secondary schools.

However, insufficient links have been developed with the primary schools even though these are developing well in dance and drama.

Inclusion

- There is satisfactory inclusion of pupils in music. While there are fewer opportunities for boys to sing, the good range of extra-curricular activities provides opportunity for all pupils to extend their musical experiences. However, no analysis has been undertaken to ensure that equal opportunities are provided for all pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- refining the curriculum workbooks to include clear learning objectives directly linked to pupil assessment and appropriate extension tasks
- increasing the range of instruments in the classroom including providing more opportunity for the use of ICT
- making more of the contribution of music to the whole curriculum by developing links with other subjects especially other arts subjects.

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

Anthony Knight
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools