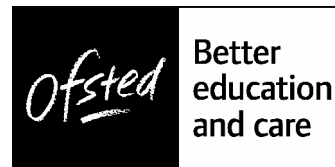


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23 January 2007

Mr R Fugill
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Dear Mr Fugill

Ofsted subject inspection programme – Music

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on Wednesday 06 and Thursday 07 December 2006 to look at work in music.

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 was 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.

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 both the heads of music, discussion with pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work including audio recordings and observation of four music lessons.

The overall effectiveness of music was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Standards at Key Stage 3 are good. Pupils make good progress from their varied starting points and achieve standards above the national expectation by the end of Year 9.
- Standards at Key Stage 4 are also good. Pupils maintain their good progress from Key Stage 3 and achieve standards above national expectations. Standards and numbers taking music are improving each year.
- Pupils adopt positive attitudes to music and behave well in lessons. They enjoy music and acknowledge that they make progress.

Quality of teaching and learning in music

The quality of teaching and learning in music is good.

- The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers do very well with inadequate resources and accommodation. Teachers motivate pupils with a good range of musical activities. However, learning objectives are not always clear and do not match the different learning needs of the pupils.
- Assessment is regular and largely accurate although there is a slight tendency to over-generosity at times, especially at Key Stage 3.
- Support and guidance are good overall. Pupils have the opportunities to extend their musical skills through a good range of practical musical opportunities.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

The quality of the music curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is progressive: the Key Stage 3 schemes of work lead naturally to the Key Stage 4 GCSE curriculum. However, inadequate instrumental resources and accommodation constrain the curriculum from being more exciting. Singing and ICT are notably under-developed, especially at Key Stage 3.
- The extended curriculum is expanding and standards are improving. Activities take account of a wide range of pupil interests and abilities. The use of the school at weekends by Local Authority Music groups supports a wide range of pupils well, but there are some concerns about the amount of care shown towards the buildings by some pupils who attend these activities.
- Despite the constraints, the music curriculum allows pupils to be creative. Pupils enjoy the strong focus on practical activities.

Leadership and management of music

Leadership and management of music are good.

- The shared leadership and management of the music department work well. The joint heads of music have made an accurate evaluation of overall standards and provision and are focused on the raising achievement agenda. For example, schemes of works are regularly reviewed to ensure progression. However, formal departmental self-evaluation is still at an early stage of development and there is insufficient emphasis on specific aspects of the music curriculum such as singing and developing ICT.
- Necessary improvements to the inadequate and shabby accommodation and resources for music have been constrained by the school's budget. The school is fully aware of how poor accommodation and resources are limiting the work of the music department but is finding it difficult to find ways to make the improvements needed.

Subject issue

Y6/7 baseline data collection

Baseline testing at Key Stage 3 is embryonic and requires a stronger focus on early identification of pupils' skills, knowledge and musical understanding on transfer from Year 6.

Music partnerships

Partnerships are limited to a few external partners, for example the local university providing PGCE students and a local recording studio. More proactive links need to be pursued.

Inclusion

Inclusion is a strong feature of the music provision in this school. The practical focus of the curriculum includes all pupils. Extra-curricular music provides opportunities for all pupils to get involved in numerous rock bands and 'junk' bands and there is a good range of more formal instrumental ensembles.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- expanding music resources, including ICT at Key Stage 3, to enrich the curriculum further
- ensuring that all lesson planning includes specific, measurable learning objectives that are clearly understood by all pupils
- raising the profile of singing throughout the curriculum
- making sure that the curriculum, resources and teaching strategies meet the needs of all pupils.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Clive Kempton HMI
Her Majesty's Inspector