

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 0207 4216855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr Aidan McGovern
Headteacher
St Martha's Catholic Primary School
Field Lane
Gaywood
Kings Lynn
Norfolk
PE30 4AY

Dear Mr McGovern

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme 2006/7 – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 12 and 13 March 2007. 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 staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, observation of two lessons, one assembly and two extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of music was judged to be good. Music makes a valuable contribution to the school and to pupils' personal development.

Achievement and standards

Overall, achievement and standards are good.

- Standards in Key Stage 2 are above average overall and the standard of singing is a particular strength. Pupils sing accurately, with good diction, sense of pitch and musical phrasing. The choir sang *Panis Angelicus* in two parts confidently, responding well to the challenging teaching. Instrumental skills are also above average and pupils play their own compositions with control and good ensemble skills. Pupils have developed their musical ideas imaginatively and with a good sense of musical structure. In the reception class, pupils enjoy taking part and sing with enthusiasm. No evidence of work at Key Stage 1 was observed.
- Music is making a distinctive contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils are enthusiastic about music and keen to take part. They talked with delight of their involvement in music and pride in representing the school at the concert in the Corn Exchange.
- A good proportion of pupils are learning instruments with specialist teachers through the school's good links with Springwood High School. Pupils are making good progress in these lessons and in the extra-curricular activities. Both the choir and recorder groups played well at the evening concert in the Corn Exchange. The choir draws its pupils from Years 3–6 and reflects the school's strong commitment to the inclusion of as many pupils as possible in music. A good proportion, around four out of ten pupils in Years 3-6, take part in this choir.

Quality of provision

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- At its best, teaching is confident and makes good use of subject knowledge. Within a disciplined framework, activities are both challenging and fun. Pupils respond positively to this approach. Good attention to musical detail, for example in the teaching of singing, ensures pupils make good progress in both technical and musical aspects. Questioning is effective in making pupils listen more carefully and think about how they might improve their work.
- Teaching is less assured when taught by non-specialist class teachers. However, the use of a published scheme provides a good structure to the learning and helps ensure good progress. Assessment at the end of each unit is carefully graded and ensures expectations for pupils of different abilities are clear. Nevertheless, inaccuracies are not always identified and worked on to improve the musical outcome.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

The curriculum is good.

- Pupils experience a well balanced and broad range of musical experiences through the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities. The published scheme provides confidence for class teachers and ensures skills are taught progressively. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn instruments and many pupils thrive on the opportunities offered. However, apart from the recorder group, there is no opportunity for pupils to play together in an instrumental ensemble. The provision for singing is very good and a strength.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- The subject leader has a clear vision for music, and recognises the contribution the subject makes both to the Catholic ethos of the school and the personal development of pupils. Some monitoring of teaching has been undertaken by the subject leader, and has proved helpful in raising standards.
- Opportunities have been provided to extend teachers' skills and confidence in music through training. These should be extended to ensure teachers' skills and confidence are developed further, particularly through sharing the expertise of the subject leader.

Subject issues

- Assessment and the use of data are satisfactory. Pupils' progress is regularly checked at the end of each unit of work, and these assessments are used effectively to check individual pupil's progress. However these assessments are not related to National Curriculum Levels and the information collected is not yet being used to provide a clear picture of standards and progress across the school.
- The school works effectively in partnership with others to enrich its music provision. Good links with the neighbouring secondary school in particular enable a good proportion of pupils to learn instruments with visiting specialist teachers.

Inclusion

- The school has a strong commitment to ensuring all pupils benefit from music. The choir is open to all and pupils themselves speak of the love they have for music. As one pupil commented: *'everyone enjoys it...even if you're not very good at it!'*. Above average numbers of pupils are involved in music, either through singing or instrumental playing, and all pupils sing regularly.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- making better use of assessment data to enable a clearer picture of standards and progress through the school
- providing additional training for teachers to increase their musical knowledge, skills and confidence
- offering more opportunities for instrumentalists to play together in extra-curricular clubs.

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 but it will not 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

Tony Shield
Additional Inspector