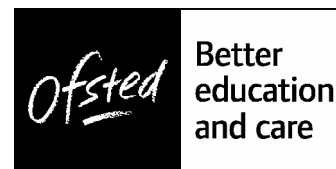


Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



19 March 2007

Mr Paul Fox
Headteacher
St Michael's Church of England Primary School
Monks' Dyke Road
Louth
Lincolnshire
LN11 9AR

Dear Mr Fox

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you very much indeed for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 25 and 26 February 2007. Particular thanks, too, to the teaching staff and chair of governors for their time and contributions to the visit, and to Year 6 pupils who were excellent ambassadors for your school.

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, particularly in the contribution that music makes to the school community.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good overall with the best progress being made from Reception to Year 2. Pupils' personal development is a strength of the music provision.

- Pupils join the school with lower than expected standards in music. They make good progress in the Reception class and in Key Stage 1 achieving standards that are above national expectations by Year 2. However, they do not maintain this progress in lessons at Key Stage 2 and drop back to standards that are broadly in line with national expectations.
- There are good standards of performance in extra-curricular activities and in massed singing, for example in collective worship. Pupils speak highly of the variety of musical opportunities and of how these activities contribute significantly to their overall enjoyment of school. These activities also play an important part in raising levels of pupils' self-esteem and building links with the local community.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- The teachers that lead most curriculum lessons, extra-curricular and enrichment activities and collective singing have very good subject knowledge and personal musical skills. This expertise is used very effectively to model good practice to pupils. In the best lessons (including instrumental tuition), the teacher's musical leadership leads to pupils' responding with confidence and ever-increasing practical skills. Their aural skills are developed too, because teachers understand how the key skills of performing and listening can be developed effectively together.
- Lessons are always well-planned with clear learning objectives and good classroom management strategies to ensure that everyone is included and kept engaged.
- Sometimes, despite teachers' high levels of personal musical skill, inappropriate use of notation or reliance on literacy skills inhibits pupils' musical creativity. Opportunities were also sometimes missed for pupils to listen and improvise their own rhythms.
- Published schemes of work provide a thorough structure and model of lesson planning that give consistency of content. This is particularly appreciated by teachers who take their own class for music. However, more care needs to be taken to ensure that the focus for pupils' learning is on the development of specific skills, knowledge, and understanding rather than completion of the published units of work.
- There is no doubt that pupils enjoy their music-making in this school and that they have very good attitudes towards the subject.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- Overall, the time given to music is good in this school. However, while good attention is given to singing every day, there is insufficient regular development of pupils' musical skills.
- The school has dedicated a music room and has also invested in full-sized keyboards and an appropriate range of classroom percussion instruments. The lighting in this room is rather dull and, having no outside wall, the room lacks both light and air-flow. Nevertheless, this room has great potential and, situated next to the school reception, gives a very clear message about the importance of music in the school.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good.

- Since taking up the post of curriculum coordinator in September 2006, the subject leader has worked hard and established effective and thorough management of the subject in the school.
- The school development plan gives appropriate recognition to instrumental tuition and extra-curricular activities and the contribution that music makes to the community. More attention now needs to be given to improving the quality of teaching and the curriculum, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- You are fully supportive of music and play an active role in the development and promotion of the subject. There is good capacity for improvement and the school is aware of the need for teachers to work together to further develop their teaching and the monitoring of pupils' progress.

Subject issues: data collection and partnerships

- The collection and use of data on pupils' musical needs and interests are satisfactory overall. While the school's data collection is thorough and well-recorded, it needs to be linked more clearly to the musical learning of individual pupils.
- Links with the local authority music service are good and peripatetic teachers keep useful records of pupils' progress. These records are passed to secondary schools when pupils transfer, and there is good liaison about these pupils. However, there is very little liaison about other curriculum matters.
- Links with the local community are good; music groups from the school regularly participate in local events and perform to community groups. In return, local musicians help the school with their expertise or by facilitating events.

Inclusion

- There is a good ethos of inclusion of pupils in music. The good range of extra-curricular activities, including performances that involve the whole school, provides opportunity for all pupils to participate.
- Take-up for instrumental tuition is good, and analysis of pupils involved in these lessons show that equal opportunities are provided for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities – indeed there are examples of this tuition having a very good effect on the personal development of these pupils. Boys and girls participate equally, although many more girls than boys sing in the school choir and there is an imbalance in boys and girls that play string instruments and brass instruments. The school ensures that pupils are not prevented from benefiting from instrumental tuition because of financial hardship.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing consistency in teaching by ensuring all work is focussed on the development of pupils' musicality, rather than completion of particular topic-content
- improving the learning environment of the music room
- providing more opportunities for teachers to discuss and share good practice with each other, particularly in terms of assessing and promoting pupils' musical development
- developing links with feeder secondary schools in order to promote shared practice, shared resources, and to ensure that pupils' progress is continued in Year 7.

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

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools