

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



16 October 2007

Mr P Costello
Headteacher
Guildford County School
Farnham Road
Guildford
GU2 4LU

Dear Mr Costello

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 8-9 October 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 student is benefiting from your music provision. It also explored the links you have developed with other schools and agencies.

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: discussions with members of staff, students and key partners, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of lessons and extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of music is outstanding. Students are provided with an excellent range of opportunities to make music and perform together at the highest standards. The involvement of boys in the boys' choir is particularly impressive.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are outstanding.

- Attainment in lessons is always at least good. Students respond excellently to the work and enjoy their music. They show good performance skills on keyboards and apply musical knowledge effectively in their compositions. Good opportunities are given for students to work creatively.
- The quality of performance in the broad range of extra-curricular activities is of the very highest standard. Students thrive on the high level of challenge and expectation and give of their best. Some students in the sixth form contribute significantly to the music provision through their leadership of activities. Younger students also contribute through performances to the local junior schools.
- All students perform in house competitions and large numbers are involved in extra-curricular activities. However, the school is aware of the need to encourage more students to follow a course of study in Key Stage 4. Current numbers do not reflect the status of music in the school.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

- Relationships between students and staff are excellent. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use this effectively to increase students' learning. For example, there were 'eureka' moments in the music technology lesson when students were helped to understand technical devices.
- All staff use questioning effectively such as when students were encouraged to respond to their own questions in a Key Stage 4 lesson. Excellent links were also made between visual and aural learning in a Year 9 lesson.
- Leadership of extra-curricular activities is also excellent. Particularly noteworthy is the economy of language used so that the pace of learning is not disrupted by too much verbal interruption. Also the constant emphasis on aural development enables rapid progress.
- Students are generally clear about the levels of work they are achieving and asked for even more information about what they need to do to achieve a higher level.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- There is a well balanced curriculum in Key Stage 3 which has been adapted sensibly in the light of students' learning needs. For example, the recognition of the need to do more of less so that students can enjoy

more extended exploration of the selected areas of work. However, the school's emphasis on creativity is not reflected in the duration of sessions so that there is limited opportunity for students to fully develop their ideas together for longer than the one hour sessions.

- The extra-curricular provision is outstanding in range and choice of repertoire. For example, the skilful balance of music for the boys' choir impressively engages and develops the musical interests of all involved.
- The students enjoy using the keyboards but are right in wanting more variety in the instruments that can be readily used in the music lessons.
- The school has recognised the need to extend the numbers of students involved in study of music beyond Key Stage 3. The senior leadership team is now giving appropriate attention to exploring different types of qualification that could provide a meaningful complement to the performance opportunities available in the extra-curricular activities.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good overall with some outstanding features.

- The subject leader has high expectations for staff and students which are reflected in the outstanding range and quality of musical opportunities. However, the ongoing challenge to maintain and improve standards, especially as the designated specialism, places considerable pressure on the music team. While they are a strong team with excellent expertise the senior leadership team recognises that more support is needed to sustain this level of output and to ensure staff are not over-extended. This support includes both staffing and resources.
- Music makes a significant contribution, especially to the students involved in the extra-curricular activities. However, the full potential of music as the school's designated specialism is not yet being maximised. For example, there is insufficient central analysis of data, both to ensure all students are involved, whatever their musical interests and aptitudes, and to identify and extend aspects of the work that are particularly effective.

Subject issues

Data Collection

- There is good ongoing development of assessment structures and procedures. Students' work is recorded regularly and used to raise expectations. Clear criteria are used well by students to assess their own and each other's work. However, there is insufficient central analysis of data.

Partnership Links

- The links with primary schools are excellent. The music staff and students provide effective support and inspiration to staff and pupils in the primary schools. The involvement of boys from the boys' choir makes a particularly strong impact through the very positive role models.

Inclusion

- Inclusion is outstanding. The inclusion of boys and girls is extremely impressive and stands as a marker for all schools. The distinctive features which enable this inclusion include the superb way that the boys are helped to feel special through for example having their own choir tie, the skilful selection of repertoire and, above all, the effect of the accumulative development of positive male role models.
- The extent of inclusion for other groups is not so clear because data is not available. However, there are clear signs of students of different abilities being engaged equally.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- finding ways to increase the numbers of students who benefit from the opportunity to extend their study of music beyond Key Stage 3
- collecting and analysing central data to maximise the impact of music on all pupils and on the whole school
- ensuring the excellent provision is sustainable by providing more support to the music department.

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

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