

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



11 June 2008

Mrs A Partridge  
Headteacher  
Earl Spencer Primary School  
Streatfield Road  
Spencer Estate  
Northampton  
Northamptonshire  
NN5 7DE

Dear Mrs Partridge

### Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on the 21 May 2008. 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.

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 and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory. The school is putting its energies into raising standards in the core subjects and consequently music is not a current priority. Nevertheless, there is clear recognition of the contribution music can make to pupils' education and continued effort to provide a range of musical experiences for all pupils.

## Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are satisfactory.

- Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress. They have a secure understanding of how sounds can be changed. Standards by the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly in line with expectations. Pupils sing confidently, can name instruments and are keen to offer creative ideas during lessons.
- Progress in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. Pupils continue to enjoy music and sing with accuracy in lessons and during hymn practice. They respond well to instructions and work enthusiastically. However, there is insufficient challenge and not enough opportunity for pupils to reach the highest standards of which they are capable.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they work very well together. Many pupils are involved in school musical events but only a few learn a musical instrument. They rightly want more opportunities to learn to play an instrument and enjoy more music making in extra-curricular activities. There are currently no extra-curricular music activities although there are good plans to start a choir next term.

## Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good. Pupils are skilfully engaged in music activities and effective questioning helps pupils develop their musical understanding. Particularly good use is made of asking pupils to demonstrate rather than just provide spoken answers.
- Teaching in the rest of the school is satisfactory overall. In all lessons there were good features such as letting the pupils in Year 1 sing a song first without any lead from the teacher and then follow a given pitch when repeating the same song. Lessons were well planned and tasks organised effectively. Pupils were consistently given opportunities to make decisions and contribute to the work. However, work was not always matched to pupils' different learning needs. For example, the software used in a Key Stage 2 lesson did not provide sufficient challenge and pupils quickly identified the limited potential of the recorded excerpts. There was also an over-reliance on the use of talk to help pupils improve. Pupils would have benefited from more opportunity to learn from demonstration and from hearing recordings of their own work.
- Teachers make some ongoing informal assessment, so that praise is given when pupils provide good work, but insufficient information is collected to ensure all are making at least satisfactory progress. Lesson objectives are not always clear enough to provide the focus for assessment and pupils are not sure what they need to do to improve their work further.
- Singing is an important part of music making in this school. However the techniques to develop and improve class singing, for example improving

breathing and diction, are not developed consistently during lessons or whole school singing practices.

### Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- The planning of the music curriculum is much stronger in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. Planning in Key Stage 1 is particularly impressive as teachers have made effective use of the QCA scheme of work and provided clear guidance for the lessons taught by the Higher Level Teaching Assistant. There is good understanding of the need to ensure musical skills, knowledge and understanding are developed in dedicated music lessons as well as through linked work within broad curriculum topics.
- The curriculum in Key Stage 2 is less developed and the school is aware of the need to give more attention to ensuring pupils receive a balanced and progressive programme.
- The school has provided a good range of additional music events such as the African drumming sessions and the six week instrumental programme in Key Stage 2. However, the instrumental programme had limited impact because of its short time-span.
- The school has sought to find experiences for all pupils. However, there is insufficient opportunity for all to extend their musical skills and interests through extra-curricular activities. Only a few pupils have instrumental tuition.

### Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are satisfactory.

- The school is very supportive of music even though its current priority is very much on increasing standards in the core subjects. Regular opportunities have been safeguarded for singing and additional musical experiences provided for pupils.
- Music is managed within each key stage and while this works well within the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, the planning in Key Stage 2 and the overview across all key stages are less well developed. Assessment is also undeveloped.
- The Deputy Headteacher is aware of the Sing-Up initiative and has made contact with the regional representative. There are clear plans for the further development of singing through, for example, the creation of a school choir and through seeking support for improving the quality of singing through the school.

Subject issues:

#### Partnership Links

- Good links have been developed with other schools in the local cluster who meet each term. The programme is managed effectively so that each headteacher takes responsibility for a subject and leads discussion with the whole group.
- Satisfactory links have been developed with the music service.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- mapping the curriculum more rigorously to ensure all learning experiences are taught as part of a balanced progressive programme
- refining learning objectives so that pupils know what to do to improve their work and simple information can be collected about pupils' progress
- providing regular extra-curricular experiences so pupils can extend their musical interests.

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