

17 July 2008

Mrs F Chapman
Headteacher
St Paul's Catholic Primary School
Bourne Road
Paulsgrove
Portsmouth
PO6 4JD

Dear Mrs Chapman

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in Music

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 15 July 2008 to look at how singing is being developed in your school.

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 without their consent.

The visit included: discussions with members of staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, observation of whole class singing, choir and year group performances and Leavers' Mass.

Features of good practice observed

- There is a strong commitment to singing in the school, promoted by you, and many teachers and teaching assistants play a key role in teaching singing and directing performances.
- The school provides a good range of performing opportunities for pupils both in the school and the community, including festivals and large scale singing events with other local schools. These make a good contribution to pupils' personal development, particularly their self-confidence and enjoyment.
- Pupils clearly enjoy singing in these activities and are confident performers. They communicate the mood and context of different songs well and adapt their voices skilfully to incorporate dynamic contrast. Clear and crisp diction is a strong and consistent feature although pupils' upper register and sense of phrasing is less well developed.
- This year, the school's involvement in 'Sing Up' – a national singing initiative – has raised the profile of singing amongst staff and pupils. The school has received advice on aspects such as warm ups, posture, breath

control and mouth shape, which are a routine part of singing sessions. The school realises that a greater variety of warm ups will need to be used to maintain teachers' and pupils' interest over time. Pupils have clearly enjoyed the singing workshops, led by visiting singing specialists, and the boys' 'Sing Up' event at Fratton Park. However, only a small minority of boys sing in the schools' choirs.

Areas for development

As we discussed, the provision in the school could be further improved by:

- ensuring teachers and teaching assistants pitch warm up exercises and unaccompanied songs to match the natural pitch of most pupils' voices and help them develop their upper register
- monitoring the planning for curriculum music in each year, to check coverage and breadth and secure the systematic development of singing skills.

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

As I explained previously, 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

Margaret Dickinson
Her Majesty's Inspector