

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)



14 October 2008

Mrs P Westwood  
Headteacher  
Northampton School for Girls  
Spinney Hill Road  
Devon Way  
Northampton  
NN3 6DG

Dear Mrs Westwood

### Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on the 30 September and 1 October 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 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 and students and head of the Music Service, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of lessons and extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of music is good with some outstanding features. Students have excellent opportunities and the school puts commendable emphasis on providing support for those in less advantaged circumstances both within the school and in the local area. Following a period of considerable change the school has just moved into impressive new buildings and two of the music team department have been given joint responsibility to lead the department.

## Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are good overall with strengths in the numbers of students taking part in extra-curricular activities and receiving instrumental lessons.

- Standards are good across the wide range of extra-curricular ensembles. Students make at least good progress in these groups and in their instrumental lessons. Students have performed at national events and are fully involved in regional ensembles.
- The numbers involved are high in Key Stage 3 with about four in ten students taking part in extra-curricular activities and slightly more receiving instrumental lessons. Numbers in Key Stage 4 are also high but decrease considerably in Year 11 and in the sixth form.
- The standards attained and the progress made by students in Key Stage 3 varies across classes. Some classes made rapid progress within the lesson and demonstrated standards at least in line with national expectations. Given the range of attainment on entry this represents good progress overall. However, progress was less in other classes because students had not always developed the skills needed to achieve fully in the tasks set.
- Standards and progress overall are good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.

## Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good overall with strengths in the extent to which students enjoy music and feel encouraged to take part.

- Students enjoy music lessons and the range of additional opportunities. They appreciate the breadth of experiences in music lessons and particularly welcome practical work.
- The most effective lessons have excellent pace and high expectations, constantly challenging students to contribute their own ideas. The emphasis on high quality class performance also contributed significantly to the rapid progress made by the students.
- In less effective lessons a lack of clarity about the focus for the learning meant that tasks were not always sequenced progressively. As a result, students were not always clear what was expected or did not have sufficient skills to succeed in the tasks given. Progress would also be increased through ensuring students always know what they can do to provide an even better response.
- Good marking schemes are being developed and assessment criteria increasingly shared and refined with the students. While assessment information is collected regularly, students are right in asking for more information about how well they are doing.

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

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

- There is an excellent range of opportunities available for all students. The development of the 'academy' which takes place after school is rightfully praised highly by students. The content of the curriculum is planned well and described clearly through the good curriculum map and summaries of the units of work in Key Stage 3.
- The school is giving appropriate attention to developing schemes of work in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Further work is also taking place to develop the excellent assessment procedures so that there is always sufficient emphasis on increasing students' depth of musical understanding.
- Some good use is being made of music in other lessons which is supported through helpful information about the ways that music can have an impact on how students respond to learning. Using these links as an opportunity for musical development is recognised as an area for further investigation.

## Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good with strength in the excellent emphasis on the inclusion of all pupils.

- You have a clear vision for music as an important part of the school curriculum and provide excellent support for additional opportunities for all within and beyond the school. You also have an accurate view of the provision and understanding of what needs to be done to improve provision even further.
- The music team works well together. Good ideas have been developed such as the use of baseline assessment and there is rigorous monitoring of students' attendance at extra-curricular activities and instrumental lessons.
- The school's specialist targets are broadly met with particular success in the broadening of the curriculum provision and increasing participation.
- The school hosts a Saturday morning music school which provides good opportunities for the students who play in these groups. Other students would also welcome hearing these groups perform to the rest of the school.

Subject issue:

## Inclusion

- The school subsidises instrumental lessons which provides excellent opportunity for all students to benefit from this experience. The development of the 'academy' and the support provided to other schools in particular ensure everyone can get involved.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring students always know what they need to do to provide an even better response
- providing more information to students about the progress they are making
- building on the use of music in other subjects by identifying ways in which students' musical understanding can be extended through these experiences, for example, through investigating how music reflects the time and place in which it is created, performed and heard.

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