

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mrs J Bainbridge
Acting Headteacher
St Michael's C of E Primary School
Church Road
Weeton
Preston
PR4 3WD

Dear Mrs Bainbridge

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on the 20 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 pupil is benefiting from your music provision. It also explored any 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 observations of lessons.

I noted the difficult circumstances at the time of my visit, particularly the lack of a substantive headteacher. I recognise that while music has not been a priority for the school, you are aware of some issues that require urgent action. As we discussed, the weaknesses in the current provision mean that the overall effectiveness of music is inadequate.

These were the main points noted during the visit:

Achievement and standards

- Pupils in the infant class enjoy a good range of music activities, including singing, which helps them to use instruments successfully and understand how to put different sound sources together. Children start school with musical abilities generally below that expected for their age. Overall they make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 2. However, because activities are not matched appropriately to pupils' capabilities in Key Stage 2, pupils make inadequate progress by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils value the opportunities provided by the school to take part in workshops and explore music from other cultures. They also enjoy the annual nativity concerts which involves all pupils. Older pupils report how much they like helping the younger ones as they learn new songs.

Quality of teaching and learning

- Teaching in the infant class is effective and activities are well-matched to pupils' abilities. However music is not always taught regularly to pupils in Key Stage 2 and singing is under-represented in classroom music lessons.
- There is insufficient recording of pupils' work and thus they find it difficult to recognise the progress they have made and understand what they need to do to improve their work further.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

- The scheme of work for Key Stage 2 requires significant improvement to ensure that it meets the needs and interests of all pupils. Greater clarity of learning objectives and more challenge is needed to raise standards and increase pupils' progress. Currently more difficult work is given to the older pupils regardless of their musical ability.
- About a quarter of pupils learn a musical instrument but they are not given enough opportunities to use them in class music lessons. At present there are no other opportunities for pupils to make music together in extra-curricular activities.

Leadership and management of music

- Not enough support has been given to music in the past. However, you recognise the areas where improvements are needed. Music deserves more direct support from governors to ensure the necessary improvements are made. In particular, more attention needs to be given to monitoring the quality of provision across the school and investigating how the school can benefit from the recent national initiatives for music.

Subject issues:

Partnership Links

- The school is not aware of how it can take part in the instrumental programme funded by the Government but has plans to investigate how the pupils can be involved in the future.

Inclusion

- The school makes every effort to involve all pupils in concerts and workshops both within the school and the community. However there are limited opportunities for instrumental tuition to be increased so more pupils can be involved.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- refining and developing the scheme of work to ensure it meet the needs of all pupils
- improving the quality of teaching in order to challenge appropriately all groups of pupils and ensure they know how to improve their work
- ensuring that singing is a regular part of music lessons
- providing sufficient time for effective monitoring and improvement of the quality of music provision.

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

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector

