

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr C Hackett
Headteacher
Brindle Gregson Lane Primary School
Bournes Row
Gregson Lane
Hoghton
Preston
PR5 0DR

Dear Mr Hackett

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on the 30 June 2009. 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: observation of lessons and a hymn practice. Discussions were also held with members of staff and pupils; relevant documentation and pupils' work were scrutinised.

The overall effectiveness of music is good with some outstanding features. The school is deeply committed to the development of music and provides an outstanding range of extra-curricular opportunities which complement the classroom lessons. Pupils are keen to be involved in music making, eager to lead activities and to perform before different audiences.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are good.

- When children start in the Foundation Stage, their musical development is in line with that expected for their age. They develop a good repertoire of familiar songs and they particularly enjoy adding instrumental sounds and actions to them.
- While pupils make good progress through Key Stages 1 and 2, their progress is less rapid in Year 6 because music lessons are less frequent than in other years. Timetable changes indicate that this imbalance is to be addressed next year.
- Pupils make most progress when playing instruments and creating their own music. Singing is a regular feature of music lessons but, overall, pupils make less progress in this aspect of music learning.
- All pupils in Year 2 learn to play the recorder through whole class instrumental teaching and all children in Year 3 learn to play the guitar through group tuition sessions; an approach established by this school to increase the number of pupils who continue to have instrumental lessons. This has resulted in a high proportion of pupils being involved in instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Pupils are enthusiastic learners with very positive attitudes and behaviour in lessons. They co-operate well and are eager and willing to lead parts of lessons. For example, Year 2 pupils jumped at the chance to conduct their peers in a well known action song at the beginning of the lesson.
- The best lessons include a good range of linked music-making activities and ensure the pupils always know what they are learning. Challenge is generally appropriate and pupils are encouraged to experiment with sounds and decide which one is most suitable to use. In these lessons audio recordings play an effective part in developing pupils' independence and musical awareness.
- However, these effective teaching strategies are not used in all lessons and the school recognises that more use could be made of audio recordings together with teachers' setting more demanding tasks for those pupils who are more able.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is carried out fairly regularly and used to monitor their development. However the school recognises that pupils are not always involved as much as they could be in this work.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

The quality of the curriculum and extra-curricular provision is good with some outstanding features.

- Pupils have a weekly class music lesson and a singing session. In addition, pupils benefit considerably from the morning movement sessions and the 'Fabulous Friday' activities.
- There is a detailed scheme of work to support class music lessons. It is well balanced and clearly identifies how pupils' musical skills are developed through the school. Teachers also make good links between music and other subjects, especially art, drama and dance.
- The extensive enrichment programme enables all pupils to be involved in music making. The school choir has been re-energised with rehearsals now taking place early in the school day. This ensures that pupils attend regularly and are not prevented from doing so by transport problems. There is also a thriving Ukelele band which is popular with pupils as are the annual productions that involve the whole school.

Leadership and management of music

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

- The subject leader works tirelessly to enable pupils to be involved in musical activities and to enjoy the subject. She is well supported by senior leaders. Together they display an excellent commitment to music especially through the very good allocation of curriculum time, the quality of the instruments and the regular training undertaken by staff.
- Self-evaluation is thorough. You recognise that there now needs to be more monitoring and mentoring of music teaching and learning across the school to ensure that good practice is understood and applied by all teachers.
- The school provides additional instrumental teaching for pupils, but has not received any of the extra funding provided by the Government for instrumental teaching. However the school is exploring ways to involve pupils in this programme as soon as possible.
- Partnerships are well-established with the local community and the school benefits particularly from the loan of instruments from the local high school.

Inclusion

- The school's belief that music should be accessible to all pupils is clearly supported by its actions. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the different music opportunities provided for them. Enhancements to the basic curriculum, for example the 'Fabulous Friday' activities enable all pupils to experience different types of music.
- Pupils' involvement in instrumental lessons and additional activities is thoroughly monitored.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that more able pupils are challenged effectively in lessons
- improving teachers' use of assessment, for example through audio recordings, to help pupils identify how they can improve their work in lessons.

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