

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr K Dodd
Headteacher
Kibblesworth Primary School
West View
Kibblesworth
Gateshead
NE11 0XP

Dear Mr Dodd

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on the 22 - 23 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 extra-curricular activities, scrutiny of relevant documentation and pupils' work. Discussions were also held with members of staff, pupils and a member of the music service.

As we discussed during the inspection and in the feedback meeting, there are strengths in the breadth of music experiences and activities provided by the school for all pupils. Combined with the regular performance opportunities, they make a good contribution to developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence. The school has also financed external support, provided by the local authority, to lead the teaching of music. However, significant weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum means that pupils are not making

sufficient musical progress as they move through the school. As a result the overall effectiveness of music is inadequate.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are inadequate.

- Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy the musical activities which enable them to explore and create different sounds using traditional instruments and computer programs. They make rapid progress from their below average starting points and attain above that normally expected by the end of the Reception year.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 are below that expected overall. Pupils do not make the progress expected.
- In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, pupils underachieve because of significant gaps in their skills and their understanding of music. While pupils sing regularly and with enthusiasm in lessons, not all aspects of music learning are equally well developed and insufficient emphasis is given to pupils' creative music making.
- Pupils work well together and support each other sensibly. All pupils are involved in productions and those who have supporting roles take as much pride in their contribution as those with leading parts.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is inadequate.

- Good teaching was observed from staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children learnt well because they were engaged positively and activities met their particular needs.
- However these characteristics are not evident in other lessons where the teacher's expectations of what older pupils can achieve in lessons are too low. Pupils' work is regularly assessed but insufficient use is made of this information when music activities are planned. As a result, pupils are not given appropriate work and challenge in lessons.
- Lessons generally have a musical focus but too often pupils are insufficiently engaged in practical music making. Pupils' overall understanding of music is limited by gaps in their learning and they are given insufficient opportunities to consolidate their learning through applying what they have learned in new contexts.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good and they are anxious to be involved in music activities even when the purpose of learning is not clear to them.
- Satisfactory teaching was seen in extra-curricular activities. Pupils made effective progress because they were challenged appropriately. Difficult sections were rehearsed well; pupils listened carefully to one another and followed teachers' directions carefully.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

The quality of the curriculum is inadequate; however extra-curricular provision is satisfactory.

- The school uses a commercial scheme of work to ensure that curriculum coverage across the school is in line with national requirements. However the units of work are not adapted in order to meet the needs, experiences and interests of pupils. Consequently there is no clear plan for the systematic development of pupils' musical skills and understanding.
- While creating music is included in some lessons there is insufficient organised development of this aspect of music making. Musical facts and activities are planned and taught in isolation which makes it difficult for pupils to make connections between different aspects of musical learning.
- The school provides music activities out of lesson time and these enable all pupils to be involved in music making. More are planned for September 2009 in response to pupils' musical interests, for example guitar lessons for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Good links have been developed with the local community, for example, the regular concerts and productions and these are well received and enjoyed by pupils and their parents.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are inadequate.

- Senior leaders are committed to making improvements in music and articulate clearly their view of the importance of music. This is plainly demonstrated by the good range of music events provided for all pupils and the way all staff are involved and provide additional music activities out of lesson time. Nevertheless, senior leaders agree that overall the monitoring of provision has not been rigorous or thorough enough to identify the lack of progress made by pupils.
- Pupils' work in lessons is checked, but this generally only records that pupils have completed activities rather than identifying what they have learnt
- The school is an important part of village life and, as a result, strong links exist. Links are less well established with local secondary schools although the school is currently investigating ways to improve this situation.

Inclusion

- The basic curriculum is effectively enhanced by concerts and other music events. As a result, many pupils have been successfully involved

in concerts with other schools. Pupils talk enthusiastically about being part of them and how much they have benefited personally and musically from such opportunities.

- Older pupils will learn the guitar, as part of the instrumental programme funded by the Government, from September 2009.
- The school collects information about pupils' outside music involvement and interests, but insufficient use is made of this data when planning music activities in the classroom.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the curriculum is planned properly so that all musical skills, knowledge and understanding are developed through an appropriate balance of music activities
- using the assessment information about pupils' individual progress to plan and teach lessons which meet and challenge appropriately their particular needs
- monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and the progress made by pupils more rigorously.

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