

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



19 November 2009

Dr D Selby
Headteacher
The Lakes School
Troutbeck Bridge
Windermere
Cumbria
LA23 1HW

Dear Dr Selby

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme – Music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 14 and 15 October 2009 to look at work in music.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of music, the visit had a particular focus on the extent to which all students are benefiting from the provision. I also explored the partnerships you have developed with other schools and agencies to improve continuity and increase opportunity for your students.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of documentation and analysis of students' work. Four lessons and an extra-curricular wind-band rehearsal were observed.

The overall effectiveness of music is inadequate. While the teaching observed was satisfactory overall, significant weaknesses in curriculum provision and planning means that students make inadequate progress in Key Stage 3.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is inadequate

- Standards in music are broadly average when students start school in Year 7. However, they are below national expectations by the end of Year 9.
- A broadly average number of students took GCSE examinations in 2009 and results improved compared with previous years and were above

average. Sixth form students achieve better examination results in music than in other subjects.

- In Key Stage 3, students are underachieving because of significant gaps in their skills, understanding of music and lack of singing in lessons. Overall they make inadequate progress, despite making satisfactory progress in the lessons observed. Students make satisfactory progress in examination courses in the sixth form and in Key Stage 4.
- While some students benefit from individual instrumental and vocal tuition, there are too few regular opportunities for students to develop their ensemble skills. Students report that they very much enjoy taking part in the annual concerts and productions which develops well their confidence when performing with others.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching of music is satisfactory.

- Working relationships between teachers and students are positive, and students cooperate and support each other well in lessons.
- Lesson planning identifies carefully the broad aims and there is generally an appropriate focus on practical music-making.
- Students are given insufficient time to answer questions and, as a result, they have limited opportunities to predict and develop their own responses and thus increase their independence and musical awareness.
- While information and communication technology (ICT) and audio recordings are used successfully by students in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, they are not used regularly in Key Stage 3.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is inadequate.

- The Key Stage 3 curriculum is narrow; the scheme of work provides an outline of what is to be taught but does not include singing regularly. There are no schemes of work for Key Stage 4 or the sixth form; lessons follow closely the examination requirements. Activities happen in isolation and are not planned progressively to develop students' musical understanding and skills. As a result, students' individual needs and aptitudes are not well met.
- A range of instrumental and vocal tuition is offered. Termly concerts and annual productions give good opportunities for students to be involved in music-making. However, there are few extra-curricular ensembles which rehearse regularly and those that do are comprised mainly of girls.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is inadequate.

- The head of department ensures that work in music, including the contribution of visiting instrumental staff, runs smoothly from day-to-day. Senior leaders have responded quickly to provide support and challenge as a result of their previous monitoring and concerns. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these measures on students' achievement.
- Self-evaluation and development planning is in place but too often the systems have not been linked to measurable and improved student outcomes. Although information about students' musical interests and prior learning is collected, it has not yet resulted in changes to the curriculum to improve provision and students' progress.

Subject issue – Inclusion

- Analysis of those students involved in additional instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities revealed that they are attended mainly by girls.
- Despite timetable clashes, the school has made strenuous efforts to ensure that some students are able to access GCSE music lessons.

Subject issue – Partnerships

- The school has developed effective links within the South Lakes Federation which includes neighbouring schools and the local college. Regular meetings are held to provide support between departments.
- The school is aware that links with primary schools are underdeveloped.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing a curriculum that fully reflects all aspects of music learning, including the development of singing, and matches students' particular needs and interests
- ensuring that students make good or better musical progress by:
 - planning more challenging lessons that take better account of students' prior musical skills and understanding
 - using audio recordings to help students evaluate their work
- building on the interest and enthusiasm students show when taking part in productions, to increase participation rates and the variety of extra-curricular activities.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop music in the 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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector