

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



24 November 2009

Ms K Locket
Headteacher
Alleyne's High School
Oulton Road
Stone
Staffordshire
ST15 8DT

Dear Ms Locket

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation during my visit on 1 and 2 November 2009 with Marianne Young HMI to look at work in music.

As outlined in the initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, 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.

I am grateful to the local authority's music staff, the part-time music teacher and the senior leadership team for their help in enabling me to evaluate the department's work.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation, including records of lesson observation; scrutiny of video and audio recordings of performances; analysis of students' work; visits to rehearsals and instrumental lessons; observing the Glyndebourne Opera workshop in Stoke-on-Trent that was attended by 20 students; and observation of four classroom lessons.

There are some notable strengths to the work of the music department. Those students who take GCSE music make good progress; standards are good in additional instrumental work and extra-curricular activities. The school's partnership with the local authority's music service serves these students very well. However, there are important aspects that are

unsatisfactory, including the extent to which students from particular groups are not participating or progressing in music, failure to meet requirements for information and communication technology (ICT) in Key Stage 3, and a lack of curriculum planning in all key stages. Consequently, notwithstanding the strengths, the overall effectiveness of music is inadequate.

Achievement in music

- The proportion of students taking GCSE music is broadly in line with the national average. These students achieve high standards and make good progress. However, the great majority are more able and benefit from additional tuition; no students with special educational needs and/or disabilities have taken an examination course in recent years.
- Standards in A-Level examinations are above average, and these students make satisfactory progress overall. They make satisfactory progress in developing independent learning skills, and good progress in developing musical leadership skills through their participation in extra-curricular activities in school and in the community.
- In Year 9, students do not develop their singing skills sufficiently. They make no progress in using ICT for music-making.
- Overall, good numbers of students participate in instrumental and vocal tuition, and in extra-curricular activities. However, almost no students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or those known to be eligible for free school meals, benefit from these opportunities. Significantly more girls than boys are involved in musical activities, particularly in examination courses and vocal activities.

Quality of teaching of music

- Working relationships in lessons are positive. Students taking examination courses, and those who perform in extra-curricular groups, are highly appreciative of the time, effort and support offered to them by their teachers.
- Resources are well-organised and lessons always include some practical activity. However, there is a heavy emphasis placed on staff notation and literacy skills which limits the participation and musical development of some students, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This approach, together with the nature of initial assessments made at the start of Year 9, discourages wider, more inclusive participation in further study or additional activities.
- In Key Stage 3, recordings are made of students' work but there is limited evidence of them producing notated scores of their compositions.

Quality of the curriculum in music

- Appropriate time is given in Year 9 and for the GCSE and A-Level courses. There is a good range of additional instrumental ensembles, including a string group, jazz band, and wind-band. A chorale group has started

recently involving a small group of students, mainly girls, together with staff and middle-school students. These activities are much enjoyed.

- Year 9 projects are planned to ensure that there is no duplication of content with middle-school topics. However, there is no detailed scheme of work that plans for progression in students' learning and musical understanding, either leading from middle-school work or within Year 9. There are no departmental schemes of work for Key Stages 4 and 5.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

- There is strong musical leadership of extra-curricular rehearsals and performances, and the instrumental teaching programme is managed well.
- Self-evaluation and monitoring by senior leadership rightly celebrate the department's strengths but do not consider other equally important outcomes and provision, in particular the participation and achievement of different groups of students.
- Without curriculum schemes of work in place, there is insufficient guidance for other members of staff to ensure there is consistency of experience and that students of all abilities can make progress in their musical learning.
- Accommodation for music is reasonably ordered but very cramped. There are insufficient practice spaces, very limited facilities for ICT and recording, and the main teaching room is far too crowded for teaching a Year 9 class of 30 students.

Subject issue: Inclusion

The school is active in identifying the most able students and supporting them through examination courses and extra-curricular activities. However, there is very little analysis or promotion of other groups' involvement in musical activities or courses.

Subject issue: Partnerships

The local authority's music service makes a very good contribution to the school's work by providing instrumental tuition and leadership of ensembles. The school has built good partnerships with groups, such as Glyndebourne Opera, to broaden students' knowledge and experience of professional music-making.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the curriculum is planned adequately, through schemes of work that reflect all curriculum requirements and show how students will progress in their musical understanding, including in singing and the musical use of ICT
- improving participation by ensuring that all teaching and assessment activities recognise and meet the needs, interests and abilities of all groups of students

- improving the leadership of music through more rigorous self-evaluation and more challenging line-management that takes into account all aspects of the department's work and outcomes for all groups of students.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop music in the school.

As I explained in the 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

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector