

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



16 December 2009

Mr S Adamson  
Headteacher  
St Gregory's Catholic Comprehensive  
School  
Reynolds Lane  
Tunbridge Wells  
TN4 9XL

Dear Mr Adamson

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 24 and 25 November 2009 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 may 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of music is good. Students achieve well as a result of effective teaching and the good leadership and management of music. The school's recent difficulties in maintaining its full complement of music teachers have now been resolved. However, because of previous temporary arrangements a very small minority of students have not yet developed positive attitudes to learning in music.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is good.

- When students join the school in Year 7, most are attaining below the national expectations for music. Students make particularly good progress

in composing, playing instruments and listening during Key Stage 3. By the end of Year 9, attainment is in line with national expectations.

- Results in GCSE examinations over recent years have been well above the national average. Students' results in music are higher than those in their other subjects. School monitoring information indicates that almost all students in Year 11 are making good progress towards their targets and will gain higher grades at GCSE.
- A good proportion of students receives instrumental lessons either in school or privately. More learn privately than in school where some groups of pupils are underrepresented. A good number are involved in extra-curricular activities where they achieve well.
- Most students have very positive attitudes to their music making. They collaborate very well and support each other in a friendly and constructive way. A very small minority of students in Key Stage 3 does not respond positively because they have not yet established good relationships with their teacher, but behaviour overall is good.
- In recent years, students in the sixth form have attained broadly in line with national averages in A-level examinations. School monitoring suggests that current students are on track to attain in line with national averages. Students in the sixth form show good initiative by supporting and leading musical activities in the school.

#### Quality of teaching of music

The quality of teaching of music is good.

- Most teaching is lively and involves students in practical music making where they learn through first-hand experience. In almost all cases, very positive professional relationships and teachers' strong subject knowledge help students to be effective learners and make good progress.
- Most lessons have a clear focus and students develop musical understanding as a result of well-sequenced activities which build logically on each other. Regular assessments and helpful feedback help them to understand how they are progressing and how to improve the quality of their work. However, in a minority of cases, planning does not identify clearly enough what students are expected to learn, as opposed to do, in lessons. In a few lessons, too great an emphasis is given to verbal explanations at the expense of musical demonstrations and activities.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively to support students' achievements in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. In Key Stage 3, the use of ICT, while not explicit in curriculum planning, is satisfactory.

#### Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is well balanced and includes a good range of musical activities, styles and genres which students enjoy. Schemes of work are

being re-written in response to national developments. The department recognises that further clarity is needed in schemes of work for GCSE and A-level courses and for how ICT will be developed further within the curriculum in Key Stage 3.

- The curriculum is enhanced well through a good range of instrumental lessons, extra-curricular activities, whole-school events and other activities.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is good.

- The school's clear vision for music is based on a detailed and realistic evaluation of outcomes and provision along with the recognition of the need for an inclusive approach to musical opportunities. The findings of the evaluation are being used effectively to plan actions. For example, the subject leader has analysed areas of relative weakness in provision and has improved how these aspects are taught.
- The subject improvement plan identifies clear priorities for development such as increasing the proportion of students involved in instrumental lessons. Students' progress is monitored carefully and strategies for assessment are effective so that additional support may be provided where needed.

#### Subject issue: inclusion

- The school believes that music should be accessible to all students and is taking action to involve them more widely. For example, the school provides a good range of instrumental tuition. It recognises that it needs to be more proactive in enabling more students from the different groups within the school to be involved and is investigating strategies to support the funding of these opportunities.

#### Subject issue: partnerships

- The school makes effective use of links with the local authority's music school, which provides most of the instrumental teaching in the school. Good links have been established with primary schools which the school plans to develop further. The school has, in the recent past, made good use of partnerships with professional musicians to enhance musical experience for students and recognises the potential for their more regular involvement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- building on existing good practice in teaching by consistently:
  - identifying more precisely what students are intended to learn in lessons
  - placing greater emphasis on musical illustration and demonstration rather than verbal explanation

- increasing opportunities to enrich provision for students by:
  - completing schemes of work and identifying more clearly how ICT will be taught more regularly in Key Stage 3
  - involving more students from different groups in instrumental lessons
  - developing more regular partnerships with professional musicians.

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

As I explained in a 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

David Williams  
Additional Inspector