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Mr C Curtis  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Curtis

### **Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: music**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 9 and 10 November 2011 to look at work in music.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; a meeting with two senior managers from Surrey Arts Service; analysis of students' work; visits to extra-curricular choir and band rehearsals, and observation of six lessons and two instrumental tuition sessions.

The overall effectiveness of music is outstanding.

### **Achievement in music**

Achievement in music is good.

- Standards in Key Stage 3 are above average, representing good progress considering students' abilities when they join the school. Students make particularly good progress in developing performance skills, including singing.
- The proportion of students taking the GCSE course in Key Stage 4 is consistently twice the national average. Standards are above average; they are not high because of inconsistencies in students' achievement across the course. The listening paper is an area of relative weakness. While students are well drilled in their knowledge of music theory and

technical terms, they are not always able to apply this knowledge accurately when analysing music aurally.

- Uptake for music in the sixth form is good. Students achieve particularly well in the A-level music course, reaching high standards in their final examinations. Standards are improving, but are not as high, in the music technology A-level course - partly because these students have not experienced enough music technology work earlier in their learning.
- The proportions of students engaging with additional tuition and/or extra-curricular music are good, and standards in these activities are also above average. All groups of students are involved, and effective efforts are being made to engage boys in singing work through 'Take This' and 'Man Up', the two boys' choirs.

### **Quality of teaching in music**

The quality of teaching in music is good.

- Teaching is enthusiastic and underpinned by teachers' excellent personal musical skills and knowledge. When these skills are used to demonstrate and model, students are inspired and this helps them to make good progress. However, the extent to which lessons are taught in musical sound is inconsistent. Teachers' extended use of the spoken or written word happens too frequently, particularly at the start and end of lessons, for students' musical progress to be better than good. This overuse of verbal, rather than musical explanation is also a characteristic of instrumental teaching, where more frequent use of musical demonstration would help students to make outstanding progress in their musical understanding.
- Regular use is made of audio recordings to store and assess students' work. Teachers make very good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to present lessons, but less use is made to engage students in musical activity using ICT.

### **Quality of the curriculum in music**

The quality of the curriculum in music is outstanding.

- Students in Years 7 and 8 enjoy two hours of curriculum music lessons every fortnight, while in Year 9 it is three hours. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is planned effectively to cover a wide range of musical styles, traditions and genres, and there is good understanding of the progress that students are expected to make as they progress through the school. Resources for music technology are good, although the use of ICT in Key Stage 3 is not as well developed as other areas of musical experience because these opportunities are not planned in as much detail.
- Appropriate and challenging courses are provided in Key Stages 4 and 5. While there is good strategic planning of all courses to ensure that all examination requirements are completed in a timely manner, planning overall is less detailed than in Key Stage 3.

- The music department is very well resourced, benefiting from spacious accommodation and a good range of classroom instruments. There is a good range of additional instrumental tuition and an outstanding range of extra-curricular music ensembles, including training and advanced groups for students at different stages in their musical learning. Regular visits to professional concerts and good links with community music groups enhance provision further.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in music**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is outstanding.

- The five curriculum classroom teachers of music complement each other very well, having individual expertise in world music, music technology, western Art music, popular music, and jazz. The strength in depth of the music team has been shown during the head of department's long-term leave; the success of music at St Bede's is by no means dependent on one person. It is also extremely helpful that two members of the senior leadership team teach music; they complement the less experienced but equally enthusiastic and able teachers very well.
- Self-evaluation is good, overall. The school's many musical strengths are identified very well; while the generic strengths of teachers are also correctly celebrated, some subject-specific issues, such as the use of musical modelling, are not as well considered.
- There are excellent links with Surrey Arts Service, which has its area base at the school. There are strong links with feeder primary schools for performance work, but fewer liaisons concerning curriculum planning.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- strengthening the use of ICT in the Key Stage 3 curriculum through more detailed planning throughout Years 7 to 9
- increasing the use of musical modelling and demonstration in all lessons, both in the curriculum and in the additional tuition provided by Surrey Arts Service, so that the spoken and written word supports rather than drives students' musical learning and thus helps students to make outstanding musical progress.

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

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Mark Phillips**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**