

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



26 January 2010

Mrs I O'Mara
Headteacher
St Edmund's Catholic School
Arundel Street
Portsmouth
Hampshire
PO1 1RX

Dear Mrs O'Mara

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 14 and 15 January 2010 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 and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of music is good. Since they were appointed, the subject leader and second-in-department have introduced several changes to the curriculum, which is now satisfactory and improving. Good teaching is increasing students' positive involvement in practical music-making, and as a result, they are making good progress and enjoying their lessons.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is good.

- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly average. Students make good progress in lessons and in relation to their starting points on entry to the school. They listen carefully to music, for example, evaluating how

musical devices, such as riffs and hooks, are used in popular songs. They use their understanding well when composing their own songs and subsequently perform them confidently.

- The proportion of students studying music in Key Stage 4 in recent years has been significantly above average. Results in GCSE examinations have generally been either above or well above national averages. However, a lack of continuity in teaching contributed to a fall in attainment in 2009 when results were low.
- Attainment in Key Stage 4 is now rising. Students in Year 10 are making good progress in lessons, while students in Year 11 are making satisfactory progress in completing their examination coursework. The school's analysis identifies that these students are on track to attain broadly in line with national averages.
- A satisfactory, but growing, number of students are involved in vocal or instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities, which they enjoy and appreciate.
- Students have positive attitudes and enjoy their lessons. Some older students play an active part in supporting others and in helping with activities beyond the school.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is good.

- Good working relationships between teachers and students have quickly been established. These ensure a positive climate for learning.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge, good use of questioning and helpful feedback support students to develop musical understanding while engaging them in enjoyable and relevant musical activities.
- Lesson planning identifies clearly what students are intended to learn and how activities can be adapted or developed to match the differing needs of students. Although students understand their overall targets, they are not always helped to identify specific short-term learning goals for their work.
- Appropriate use is made of information and communication technology to support students' composing in both key stages.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 is going through significant changes in response to national initiatives and as a result of feedback from students. It includes a good range of musical styles and genres and clearly identifies what students of differing prior attainment are expected to achieve by the end of each module. The subject leader is aware of the need to continue to develop the scheme as time proceeds.

- Opportunities provided beyond the classroom include a reasonable range of instrumental and vocal lessons, and an increasing range of regular extra-curricular and other activities which enhance opportunities for students.
- Resources and accommodation for music are used well, although the shortage of small spaces for group and individual work limits the extent to which students are able to listen carefully and critically to the expressive nature of their music making to further improve its quality.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in music is good.

- Music plays a key role in the school, both within and beyond the liturgy. Central to the school's vision for music are raising achievement and widening provision. There is a clear focus on involving students in active music-making and in further increasing involvement in extra-curricular provision and instrumental or vocal lessons.
- The school has secure systems to monitor the quality of its provision and uses the findings of its self-evaluation to identify where further developments or support are needed. Feedback from students is used well as part of the process of identifying areas for development.

Subject issue: inclusion

- The school's clear belief that music should be accessible to all students is exemplified in the high proportion of students studying music for GCSE. Many have developed their performing skills within the classroom without additional specialist tuition. The school's analysis of the involvement of students in extra-curricular activities has identified the need to ensure a more strategic approach to encouraging participation of students from all of the different groups within the school.

Subject issue: partnerships

- The school has well-established partnerships with its feeder schools and provides good opportunities for collaborative work which benefits pupils in these schools. There are also good partnerships with a range of external agencies, including local authority music services and professional musicians, which enhance provision for students in the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- continuing to strengthen the curriculum by:
 - completing the re-drafting of the scheme of work
 - increasing the involvement of students in a wider range of extra-curricular activities and instrumental or vocal lessons.

- further improving the quality of teaching by helping students to identify clearly and precisely the learning focus for their work in all lessons.

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

David Williams
Additional Inspector