

Music – annual report 2006

Provision for music in most Hertfordshire schools continues to be good. In primary school reports there is limited evaluation of weekly curriculum provision, but inspectors are taking the opportunity to comment upon exciting initiatives such as 'Wider Opportunities in Music'. In secondary schools, participation has continued to increase in GCSE and A Level, and standards are still above the national average.

Out of 120 Primary schools inspected, music was highlighted in 48 (40%). The new inspection format has provided the opportunity to recognise extra curricular musical activities as part of a broad, balanced and individualised school curriculum, and their important role in developing personal, social and academic qualities in pupils on a spectrum from access for all to provision for the Gifted and Talented.

The number of schools taking part in the 'Wider Opportunities in Music' programme continues to increase, with 56 schools now involved, 21 of these new in the academic year 05-06. This means that over 1600 primary children are having weekly instrumental tuition during curriculum time, learning music in ensemble through creative and innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

Out of 26 secondary schools inspected, music is highlighted in 8 (32.5%). In most, schools are recognised for their good range of extra curricular and enrichment opportunities.

At Key Stage 3 the percentage of students attaining Level 5 in Hertfordshire was 74%, higher than all other foundation subjects except P.E. and Art, and was higher than the previous year.

The number of schools participating in 'Musical Futures' continues to increase, and in some cases has resulted in higher take up for GCSE courses. The recent evaluation by Ofsted highlighted improvements in pupils' motivation, with a significant impact on the whole school.

The percentage of students gaining A*-C grades at GCSE was 79%, up from 75.7% last year, and those gaining A*-G was 98.3%, up from 96.3% last year.

The number of entries for A Level music was 207, up from 188 last year, and the percentage gaining Grades A-C was 58%, down from 72.4% in 2005. Music technology had 48 entries this year compared with 47 and the proportion of students obtaining A-C grades was 79% compared with 70.2% in 2005.

The quality of provision in primary schools is generally high, with some strong subject leadership and good results from both specialist and non-specialist teaching.

The quality and range of music provision is seen as a strength. Two schools were recognised for their Artsmark Silver awards, (Barkway First and Bernards Heath Primary), and one for Artsmark Gold, (Welwyn St Mary's), all gained during the 2005-6 academic year. Achievement in music is often reflected in comments gathered by inspectors from pupils; for instance pupils from Chorleywood School said they had 'a musical school' and were proud of their high attainment.

Leadership in music continues to be good in secondary schools and recruitment and retention has improved, not least due to a healthy number of newly qualified teachers joining Hertfordshire music departments.

At Dame Alice Owen, music is said to be an outstanding feature of the school, and at Rickmansworth School, teaching is said to be inspirational. Inspectors at Freman College thought that group work and problem solving in classroom music was contributing to the accumulation of workplace skills.

A particular strength in Hertfordshire schools is the range and quality of extra curricular provision, although there is still room for development in singing. (This is being addressed through the appointment of a Music Service Singing Strategy Leader). Also, provision of music for pupils with Special Educational Needs continues to be strong and has the potential to grow further under the guidance of specialist

leaders. Notable is the 'Achievement in Music course', developed by two Hertfordshire teachers as an alternative qualification for SEN students at KS4. Weaknesses are evident in primary schools when teachers do not have sufficient subject knowledge or confidence in music, or when specialist teachers are deployed unimaginatively. In all Key Stages, there is much potential for the increased use of ICT, and the provision of suitable accommodation for creative learning.

During 2005-6 Hertfordshire Music Service has worked to promote the 'Every Child Matters' agenda in as many aspects of its work as possible. This has included the setting up of a boys' choir in Hatfield, welcoming more looked after children into music centres and continuing to provide experienced of the highest quality for Gifted and Talented musicians.

Future priorities:

- Continue to help more schools to be involved in the 'Wider Opportunities in Music at Key Stage 2 programme
- Continue to promote the use of ICT as a learning tool in music
- Strengthen musical opportunities for all young people by developing music hubs as part of the national Music Manifesto agenda