

Department *of* Education



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report  
on

A Survey of the Music Services provided by  
The Education and Library Boards



# CONTENTS

Section	Page
FOREWORD	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. TUITION	3
3. ENSEMBLES	15
4. SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS	21
5. ORGANISATION	23
6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	27
APPENDIX 1	29
APPENDIX 2	30



## FOREWORD

When the Education and Library Boards came into being in 1973, each took over and amalgamated the music services which had been started by most of the county education committees. Most of the services were still quite small, but expansion over the next five years or so established specialist teaching of all orchestral instruments - and a few others, including singing - and in increasing numbers of schools. Each board's service developed independently, guided by the geographic and demographic demands of its area and the vision and particular specialisms of its music adviser. Belfast had already established its School of Music; the other boards began to create music centres. The bulk of the tuition, however, was always given in schools.

As the services developed, they became a recognised, and soon an essential, feature of mainstream music education. Many more schools began to develop small ensembles and larger bands or orchestras as permanent features of their institutional and public life; they saw that the specialist tuition opened for pupils doors to social opportunity and lifelong learning; and in 1992 the Northern Ireland Curriculum recognised in the music programme of study that, from key stage 2, children should, wherever possible, "have opportunities to play a more sophisticated musical instrument" than those normally used in the classroom. The important skills of playing together were fostered through a burgeoning pyramid of ensembles leading from the most elementary school groups through area and ELB-wide orchestras, bands and choirs to the Ulster Youth Orchestra, Ulster Youth Jazz Orchestra and Ulster Youth Choir. Now, each service acknowledges with pride large numbers of former pupils who teach and perform music professionally.

This first formal survey of the boards' instrumental music services, was conducted between March and December 2002. The inspectors observed instrumental lessons of all kinds, in schools and in music centres; they attended rehearsals and public concerts by ensembles at every level; they consulted principals and music teachers in schools; and they interviewed the heads and managers of the services themselves.

I welcome this report. It provides valuable information about the extent of the music services' combined activity, and the opportunities they make available to our

children and young people. It looks at the partnership between the services and the schools, and provides fascinating insights into learning and teaching, both in instrumental lessons and in group rehearsals. It celebrates the high quality of much of the work; and it raises fundamental questions of ownership, access and equality of opportunity to guide future progress. The report recognises the ethos of continuous review and development which pervades the services. I commend it to tutors, heads of service, chief executives and to the Department of Education in their quest for continuous improvement.

*Marion J Matchett.*

**Marion J Matchett (Miss)**  
**Chief Inspector**

The five Northern Ireland Music Services differ a little in the terminology they employ. In this report:

- *tutor* is used for music service personnel employed to give instrumental or vocal tuition
- *teacher* is used for school teachers
- *music centres* include the City of Belfast School of Music
- *ensembles* include large orchestras and bands as well as smaller groups

A number of quantitative terms are used. In percentages they correspond as follows:

almost/nearly all	more than 90%
most	75% - 90%
a majority	50% - 74%
a significant minority	30% - 49%
a minority	10% - 29%
very few/a small number	fewer than 10%

When qualitative categories are used they indicate the following:

- |                                      |                                |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. significant strengths             | good (ranging to outstanding)  |
| 2. strengths outweigh any weaknesses | satisfactory (ranging to good) |
| 3. weaknesses outweigh strengths     | fair ranging to satisfactory   |
| 4. significant weaknesses            | poor                           |





## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Each Education and Library Board (Board) organises a music service (service) as part of its non-statutory provision in support of education. Partly for reasons of historical development, and partly because of the geography of the areas they serve, the services differ somewhat in their provision and its organisation. This first survey focused mainly on the common elements in the services and was undertaken by a team of two inspectors between March and December 2002.
- 1.2 Each service provides tuition in the instruments of the orchestra and wind band; one or two also teach singing or instruments such as the recorder, piano or harp. Instruments are made available to the pupils as necessary. Most of the tuition is given to pupils in their school, but, where the geography of the area permits, more advanced pupils may attend a music centre. The services also organise a hierarchy of orchestras, bands, choirs and other ensembles. Most of these rehearse weekly, and several also devote time to courses - and, in the case of senior groups, concert tours - during school holiday periods. A majority of the services organise holiday courses also for pupils outside these ensembles.
- 1.3 The specialist expertise within the services is also used in a variety of other ways to enhance musical life and activity in the schools in their area. In addition, each board provides specific support for curricular music. In some, this forms part of the music service; in others, it operates separately. This report focuses on the instrumental teaching service; where curricular support personnel are part of the music service, they have been excluded from calculations.
- 1.4 Survey visits were made to 64 schools - 36 primary and 28 post-primary (15 secondary intermediate and 13 grammar schools) - and to five music centres. Eighty-two tutors were seen teaching in schools, and eleven teaching in music centres. In all, 217 lessons were observed. Forty-four visits were made to ensemble rehearsals, and 14 to performances. Groups ranged from the most elementary to the most senior, including a few comprised of tutors.



- 1.5 As part of the survey, views were sought from a sample of parents whose children received tuition. The sample comprised parents of children attending primary and post-primary schools. The parents of instrumental pupils in four schools in each board were sent a questionnaire; responses were received relating to 290 pupils.
- 1.6 While the patterns in the returns from each board differed a little, overall, most parents were satisfied with the provision which the service made for their children, and almost all reported that their children remained keen to learn to play their instrument. Most parents said they were satisfied with the quality of the teaching that their children were receiving; they felt that the children enjoyed their lessons and were making satisfactory progress. A minority of the parents who responded were dissatisfied with aspects of the service: about a quarter referred to communication about the ensemble activities provided; an equal proportion had concerns about information they received relating to their children's progress, though in one board feedback on progress drew notable approval. About 20% were dissatisfied with the length, frequency or timing of lessons, and with the extent of their children's involvement in making music with others.
- 1.7 About one-fifth of the parents made additional comments. A significant minority did so to express appreciation for the service and commend the quality of teaching and the ensemble provision. A similar number expressed concern about the timing, frequency or length of the lessons or their impact on their child's school timetable.
- 1.8 The inspection confirmed that the parents' confidence in the services is justified. Their concerns are dealt with in the appropriate sections of this report.

## 2. TUITION

### 2.1 ORGANISATION

2.1.1 The services teach pupils in primary and post-primary schools. The majority organise central provision for more advanced pupils at a music centre. Teaching is provided in schools of all management types, except in Belfast where voluntary grammar school pupils apply to the City of Belfast School of Music. In all, the services teach pupils from 61% of primary schools and 83% of post-primaries, 65% of all schools in Northern Ireland. Geographical considerations are a major constraint for most services. The proportion of the schools receiving tuition in each board ranges from 41% to 79% of the primary schools, 78% to 98% of post-primaries, and 53% to 83% of all the schools. Teaching is provided to similar percentages of controlled, maintained and other primary schools. Given the voluntary grammar schools' tradition of making their own arrangements for instrumental music teaching, provision in the post-primary sector also compares satisfactorily.

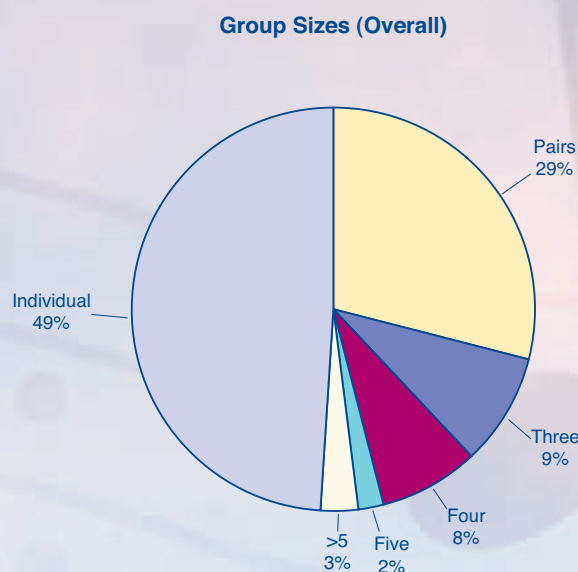
2.1.2 Many schools, not only those in the voluntary grammar sector, make arrangements for providing instrumental tuition to their pupils, outside or in addition to using their board's service. In 2001-02 the music services were teaching 13,643 pupils, just over 4.06% of the school population. The numbers taught in each board ranged from 2,313 to 3,236, and the percentages from 3.35% to 5.32% of the board's pupils.

2.1.3 All the services aim, ultimately, to provide tuition for all pupils who desire it; each has defined different but reasonable criteria for selecting the schools in which tuition is placed. The provision allocated depends on the instruments and tutors available at the time and, to some extent, on the interests of the school itself. There is some scope for services to give greater priority, when allocating the tuition, to offering pupils the widest possible choice of instrument and to promoting viable school ensembles.

2.1.4 Each service operates its own method of selecting pupils for tuition. The objective tests used vary in suitability, and most services have this aspect under review. The best systems give a high priority to pupils' demonstrable interest and enthusiasm, and avoid the feeling of identifying an elite group.

Nevertheless, the number of opportunities for new pupils to start at any time is usually small and rarely matches the demand. In the lessons observed, the girls outnumbered boys by 2:1.

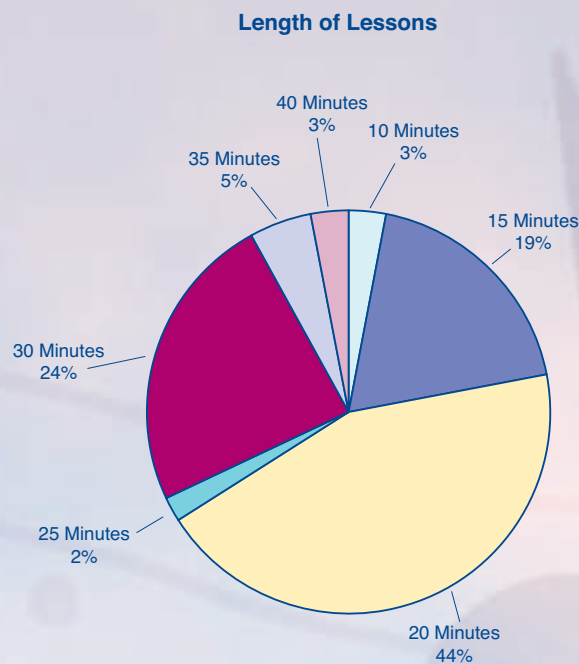
- 2.1.5 Almost half of the lessons seen were with an individual pupil; groups of five or more were rare.



Given the developments elsewhere in teaching simultaneously large numbers of string or wind pupils, the services should investigate other options and the training for tutors which such approaches would require.

- 2.1.6 Tuition given in music centres is outside school hours. Most lessons given in school are during the school day. Where the numbers of pupils permit, a rota system is usually operated to mitigate the worst effects on school subjects missed. Where this is not possible, some tutors are able to rotate the visits to the schools themselves. Generally, these arrangements are helpful, and few occasions were encountered where they might have been improved. The services should keep the actual timing and regularity of lessons in each school under continual review, but pupils need to recognise and be able to cope with the necessity of interrupting their normal daily timetable.

2.1.7 The lessons observed varied considerably in length.



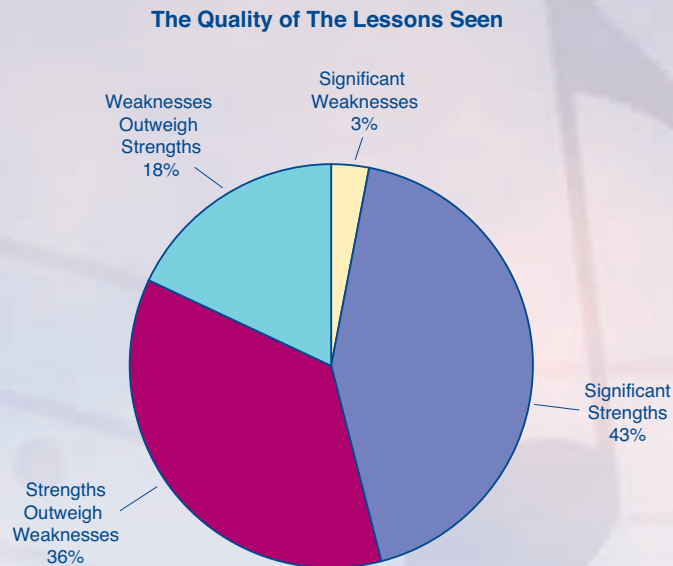
In some post-primary schools, the tutors were required to keep to the school's timetabled periods, which ensured that all lessons were a similar length. Variability elsewhere rarely related consistently to pupils' age or stage of musical development, or to the number being taught together. For example, 15-minute lessons were observed with: a single year 4 beginner, five year 4 beginners, four year 8 beginners, two primary pupils of different ages who had passed grade 3, three grade 6 post-primary pupils, and one year 13 pupil preparing for grade 8. Many of these lessons were felt to be undesirably short and even of questionable value. Although significant strengths were demonstrated in 10-15 minute lessons, the quality of the 20-30 minute lessons was significantly better overall. Services should review their policy to ensure that educational considerations are paramount in the process of timetabling.

2.1.8 Provision for recording and reporting the pupils' progress differs across the boards. Most have introduced a form of diary to be used by each pupil. When consistently used, this encourages regular and purposeful home practice, and allows the tutor to record a pupil's effort and progress; it also provides a means for the tutor and parents to communicate. The majority of the services send one or two written reports on the pupil's progress to the parents each year. Formal liaison with the school regarding pupils' progress is variable. Where practice diaries are in use, schools are sometimes encouraged to monitor them; and some services copy their reports for parents also to the school. The aspect of recording and reporting progress is under review generally; useful developments in different boards have included parent-tutor meetings, linking reports to individual action plans, self-assessment by the pupils, and a weekly record of each pupil's progress which is kept in the school.

2.1.9 In each of the boards, the pupils are able to enter public graded music examinations. The approach taken varies from recognising them as one possible way for pupils to measure their progress, to an expectation that a pupil will pass pre-determined staging posts on a regular basis. The services recognise both the benefits and the pitfalls of examination preparation, and most tutors make wise use of the facility according to the needs of the individual pupil. The majority of services make some provision also for the accompanying aural and theory of music requirements. Most organise the examinations centrally, and collate the results.

## 2.2 THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

2.2.1 The quality of most of the lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to excellent.

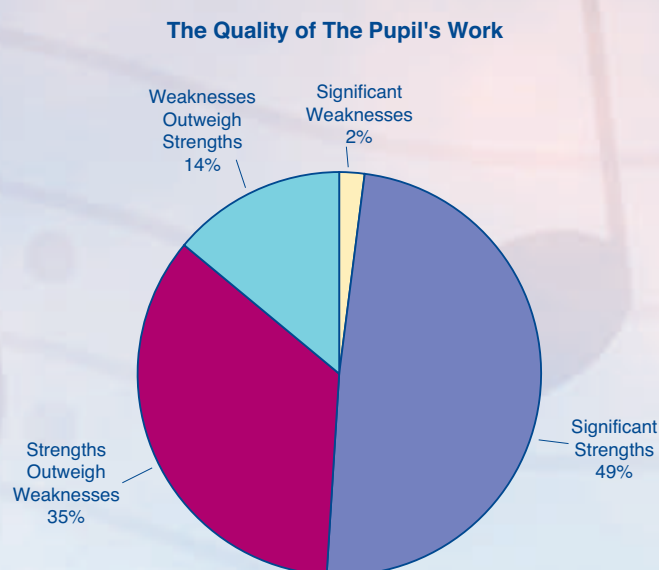


In almost all the lessons seen, the tutors established friendly and supportive relationships with the pupils. They often found time to enquire about the pupils' current interests and concerns, and established an atmosphere of mutual respect. Lessons were good-humoured and tutors created a relaxed approach which promoted the pupils' enjoyment within concentrated learning. Most tutors pitched the tone of the lesson well for the age and maturity of the pupils, who were generally confident to respond to, and sometimes to ask, questions. Many tutors used praise and encouragement effectively, while communicating high expectations; in a few cases, critical remarks were unnecessarily frequent or insensitive.

2.2.2 The quality of the environment for learning was unreliable. It was good in half as many instances as it was poor. In the latter, tutors were teaching in accommodation which was very cold, windowless, too small or over cluttered with furniture or items being stored, or too large and resonant; some tutors suffered from, or created, problems of sound interference, or were located in a corridor or through-route and subject to interruptions;

and some were moved from week to week, or even from lesson to lesson. In some schools, insufficient consideration had been given to the pastoral care implications of the location of one-to-one lessons. Occasionally, problems were exacerbated when accommodation had to be found for too many tutors at a time.

2.2.3 The quality of the pupils' learning was good or better in about half of the lessons seen; in about one-sixth it was less than satisfactory.



In the majority of lessons it was clear that the pupils were making suitable progress for the length of time they had been learning, and that they had prepared conscientiously during the preceding week; they worked hard to improve during the lesson, and made evident progress. When learning in groups, they generally engaged well with each other, listening to one other's performance and sometimes able to comment helpfully upon it. Sometimes they benefited from approaches which included - and, in a few cases, were largely based on - ensemble work: playing in three or four parts, or in solo pieces shared antiphonally. These approaches contributed to the development of the pupils' listening skills, and kept all involved consistently. In individual lessons, the tutor sometimes provided this helpful experience through duet playing. Such approaches also helped to

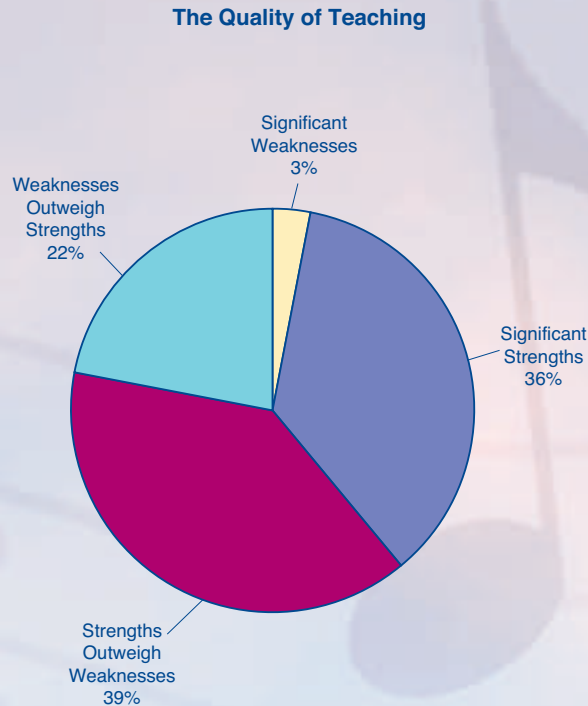


improve the pupils' fluency in performance, and taught them techniques of visual communication. Links with external music making were supported when the pupils were able to obtain help with preparing their orchestra or band parts.

2.2.4 Where the pupils' learning was best, their aural development was a major feature. They were observed to listen carefully, for example, to their tuning and intonation, and to develop and use their inner hearing when reading musical notation. Their playing of scales and arpeggios was confident and often musical; and their fluency in sight reading, and quick recognition of mistakes and their causes, provided evidence of evaluative listening. In particular, demonstration by the tutor helped them to form an aural concept of the tone or articulation they were trying to master, or the style or musical meaning they were endeavouring to present, and so to understand and more quickly achieve the desired improvement. The pupils' listening skills were also developed by opportunities to evaluate their own playing: this was a competence which some were beginning to develop at an early stage; sometimes pupils themselves identified what they should work on during the following week. Typically, good lessons provided the pupils both with systematic practice techniques to enable them to develop as independent learners, and with a feeling for sensitive performance; and the pupils demonstrated a good degree of confidence both in their ability to achieve the tasks set and also in the value and rewards which their musical learning brought.

2.2.5 Where the quality of learning was poorer, the most frequent cause was the imbalance between the attention given to aural development and that to physical control. In a significant minority of lessons, the pupils clearly believed that their only objective was to play with technical correctness; rote learning, rather than understanding, was the order of the day, and activities such as improvising, playing by ear or playing from memory - components which are not yet sufficiently common in many lessons - were missing entirely. These pupils were slower to recognise their errors, their intonation was weak, expressive playing was rare, and the concept of communicating musically through their instrument was missing. In general, they seemed to find these lessons less satisfying, and lacked a feeling of significant positive achievement.

2.2.6 The quality of over one-third of the teaching observed ranged from good to excellent; about a quarter included important areas for improvement.



An outstanding characteristic of many lessons was the tutor's combination of enthusiasm and patience. The majority of lessons were well organised, and time was well managed. Some tutors had established clear routines, and pupils arriving early were able to organise themselves and begin preparatory activities while the previous lesson drew to a close. This was a useful feature of some very short lessons, though it did not compensate fully for inadequate provision of time: lessons shorter than 20 minutes, particularly when they were group lessons, generally felt rushed, and the pupils' rate of progress over time was less clear. In the best practice, warm-up exercises were derived from and prepared for aspects of the work to be covered during the lesson; rigorous attention to detail was set within an overview of the piece as a whole, so that music-making rather than technique remained clearly in focus; the pupils' inner ear and musical intuition were invoked to lead the development of technical control; and the lesson maintained a sense of pace and progression, ending with a summary of what had been learned and targets set for the following week.

- 2.2.7 Pupils who shared lessons had usually been grouped appropriately, but the teaching did not always cater effectively for all: sometimes, too much time was spent on individual pupils; in other lessons, individual difficulties were not given sufficient attention. Tutors who achieved a satisfactory balance often kept all involved for most of the time by making judicious use of part-playing, by differentiating in the demands placed on particular pupils, and by involving all in evaluating one other's playing.
- 2.2.8 Instruments are best taught through a combination of oral instruction and musical demonstration. Most lessons made use of both, but in a majority the balance was unsatisfactory. Many tutors took a pupil's instrument to demonstrate points of technique; tutors who brought their own instruments to the lesson often used them more effectively, particularly to develop more sophisticated understanding of tone and style. In a few instances, lessons were conducted more through the medium of music than words - an ideal aim to keep in mind, even if not attainable exclusively. At times, tutors played with the pupils, helping their fluency or promoting independence in part playing; sometimes, however, playing with them was too constant and tended to mask their difficulties. A minority of the tutors relied only on spoken instruction; in these cases, the absence of musical demonstration was often a significant deficiency. The majority of tutors, nevertheless, made use of a good range of oral strategies. Many engaged the pupils effectively in discussion, often leading them to identify errors or means of improvement for themselves. A strength in a majority of lessons was the use of open questions to remind, prompt thought or analysis, seek opinion or build understanding. The quality of tutors' explanations was often high; and some tutors used a striking range of metaphors to make their teaching clearer. In a small number of lessons, the tutor's talking dominated the lesson, and too little time was left for playing.
- 2.2.9 Rather than simply teaching pupils to play the instrument, many tutors aspire to a higher aim of teaching music through their instrument. A wide range of approaches to this end were observed. There was evidence that some tutors tended to limit themselves to a small number of these approaches, but that others employed many of these, and others, on different occasions. For example, deconstructing difficult passages sometimes led to practising difficult rhythms on one pitch, playing the notes to different rhythms, concentrating on a very short extract to improve bowing or breathing techniques, improvising sequences using a difficult

interval, or experimenting with varied articulation. Through such approaches, purposeful practice, rather than simple repetition, was recognised as a vital skill to be taught; and musical expression, rather than technical proficiency, was maintained as the ultimate objective. Aural imaging, the essential skill of inner hearing, was built through singing from sight, by correcting intonation by interval rather than visually, or through playing from memory. Improvising, echo-copying and playing by ear were approaches seen infrequently but always effective in helping pupils to think and communicate through their instrument rather than simply 'recite' the notes in front of them. Expressive movement is normal in musical performance, and some tutors found ways of encouraging pupils at different stages to find a physical freedom in expressive playing. Performing during the lesson was sometimes facilitated by using attractive recorded accompaniments. Pupils were additionally motivated when they had chosen the piece they were learning, or identified strongly with its style.

- 2.2.10 Significant weaknesses resulted when assumptions underlying the teaching seemed to lean towards mechanistic thinking, where theoretical knowledge was divorced from aural understanding, and instrumental playing was viewed mainly as physical manipulation.
- 2.2.11 A majority of tutors made use of some form of lesson record to guide the pupils in their work between lessons, though some did so more consistently than others, and consequently pupils varied in their conscientiousness in using them. Generally, the tutors noted the points for practice at the end of each lesson; this was most helpful when they took the time to discuss and explain what they had written, though, appropriately, some supervised the pupils in writing their own notes. Others recorded their thoughts as the lesson proceeded, so reducing the pressure on time at the end of the lesson. Such records were particularly motivating to the pupils when they recorded practice done between lessons, including gradings to reward effort or achievement, and when they were signed regularly by their parents.

## 2.3 SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

- 2.3.1 The schools visited expressed generally high levels of satisfaction with the service they received. They appreciated the contribution the tuition made, both to the musical and social development of those learning and, through them, to the school and the local community. Many praised the extent to which tutors involved themselves in the musical life of the school. In the large majority of schools, the music specialist or co-ordinator maintained regular liaison with the tutors. In some, very efficient means of communicating had been devised to overcome problems of meeting tutors during their short time in the school. Most schools had adopted satisfactory methods of rotating pupils' lesson times so that the effect of missed classes was minimised. A small number had devised exemplary approaches which kept all the school staff informed and supported the pupils in catching up on work missed.
- 2.3.2 One-third of the schools visited paid for the music service tuition from their own funds, and a further one-sixth passed on only part of the contributory charge. The remainder recouped it from the pupils, though many operated a reduction or remission in the case of children from the same family, and most did not charge pupils who were entitled to free school meals. Some schools recognised the cost as a significant deterrent for some pupils. Many expressed strong views against imposing fees, but were not confident about their ability to continue to meet the gradually rising charges. Given the difference in the level of charge made in each board, apparent equality of access for pupils can vary considerably across Northern Ireland. The schools in which the parents paid for the tuition rarely used a differentiated scale for individual and group lessons, lessons of different lengths or pupils at different stages.
- 2.3.3 Almost all the schools provided valuable support for the pupils being taught. Most organised some form of ensemble experience; in the post-primary schools especially, orchestras, bands and a variety of smaller ensembles were the norm. Most of these groups rehearsed regularly and contributed to school assemblies, concerts, music festivals and other community events. Almost half of the schools tried to integrate the pupils' instrumental skills into their classroom music lessons, recognising both the players' special needs and the value which their experience could add. Some specialist

teachers in post-primary schools gave too little thought to the needs of these musicians and the contribution they could make in class; others not only encouraged pupils to use their instrument for improvising and composing but also for their performance assessments. Other ways in which teachers supported their instrumentalists included listening to them between lessons, designating rooms and times for them to practise, providing additional aural training and theory teaching, rehearsing or recording piano accompaniments, and arranging suitable music. In a few post-primary schools, a music teacher was allocated timetabled periods for such duties.

2.3.4 A minority of the schools took minimal responsibility for monitoring the progress of instrumental pupils; at best, they simply checked their attendance at lessons. Most of the others observed their performance regularly in school ensembles and in classroom music, and discussed them with the tutors reasonably regularly. Where pupils kept lesson records or practice notebooks, or the music service issued reports to the parents and the school, these generally facilitated effective monitoring by the teacher responsible. A few teachers had developed sophisticated routines to support their evaluation of the work, keeping efficient records and analysing and evaluating statistics.

2.3.5 The variation in levels of monitoring corresponds largely with a variation evident in the ownership which schools felt of their music service provision. Many schools, especially in the post-primary sector, felt they had control over it, as part of their overall provision for music. Commonly, they employed additional tutors privately to teach more pupils, often widening the range of instruments taught; and they had a prime responsibility in selecting the pupils to whom lessons were offered. Other schools felt that their knowledge of the pupils was a component only at the last stage of selection, and had less confidence in the testing process. Schools often said that they had far more pupils wanting to learn than could be provided with a lesson, and that pupils who were selected had insufficient choice of instrument. They were also sometimes dissatisfied with the balance of instruments allocated.

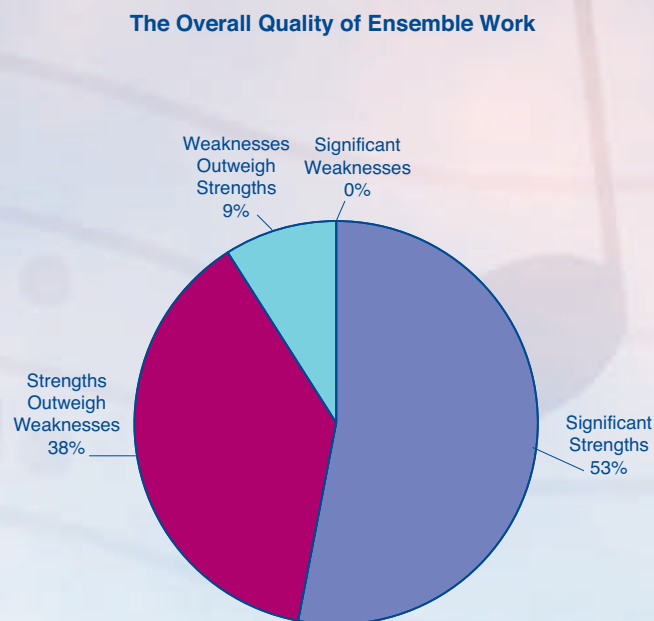
## 3. ENSEMBLES

### 3.1 ORGANISATION

- 3.1.1 A fundamental part of all the pupils' learning concerns the skills of playing with others and encountering the related repertoire. Most schools provide valuable opportunities for the pupils to perform together, so offering added purpose and satisfaction in their study. The services' centrally organised ensembles allow the more proficient players in each school to play with others who have reached a similar or higher standard, and pupils are prompted to join (or to audition) when they are ready. Each service organises a pyramid of orchestras, wind bands and other ensembles which provide this experience at different levels and train players in more advanced ensemble skills. A very few opportunities were organised for other instrumentalists or singers. In 2001-02, some 28% of the pupils learning were members of one of these ensembles. The percentage of the learners in each board ranged from 24% to 34%.
- 3.1.2 The wide geographical area served means that attendance at the most senior ensemble of each type costs many pupils considerable time in travel. As far as possible, the more junior groups are replicated on an area basis. For most services, transport costs are a significant factor.
- 3.1.3 Formal performance to an audience is a necessary and regular part of the training of each ensemble. While younger groups may work towards one or two concerts in the course of a year, most of the more experienced ensembles have reached a standard which allows them to contribute more regularly to the musical life of the community. Many give additional performances, representing their board, for example, in support of charities' fund-raising activities; and they regularly act as excellent ambassadors for Northern Ireland in concerts and festivals in Britain and Ireland, on the continent of Europe and in America. The most proficient players and singers contribute to, and benefit from, the highest levels of challenge as members of the Ulster Youth Orchestra or Ulster Youth Choir. The ensembles' rehearsals and concerts are thoroughly organised, with due attention given both to the pupils' safety and well-being and to promoting the musician's essential qualities of self-discipline and reliability.

## 3.2 THE QUALITY OF ENSEMBLE WORK

3.2.1 Rehearsals and concerts by all kinds of musical ensemble were visited, including a small number of school-based groups taken by music service staff. Sizes ranged from less than a dozen players or singers to around one hundred, and were for pupils of all standards from beginner to the most senior. The work of over half the ensembles seen was of a high quality.



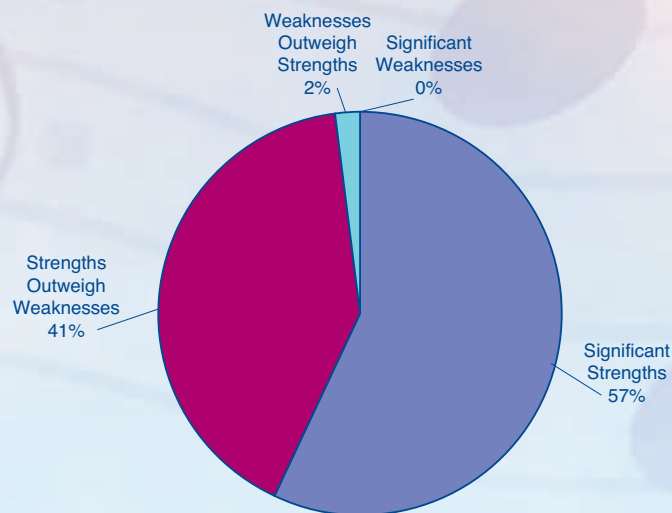
On almost every occasion, an excellent atmosphere had been created for productive music-making. The conductors and, where used, supporting tutors had established a good rapport with the pupils, characterised by friendly relationships, appropriate use of humour, and enjoyment in concentrated musical activity. The pupils were well behaved and, from the earliest stages, were beginning to learn the basic conventions of rehearsal discipline. Except in the most elementary school groups, which were designed to include all the players available, the instrumental balance was generally good. Rehearsal spaces were suitable in the majority of cases, though even some more senior central groups were hampered by a poor acoustic.



3.2.2 A common and valuable facet of the music service groups visited was their inclusiveness: both major denominations were well represented; often, there were also pupils who belonged to other ethnic groups or who were not able-bodied; and, though girls were more often in the majority, the gender balance was usually satisfactory. The players in all groups had ample opportunities to extend their social development, cultural acquaintance and mutual understanding. Their commitment to their ensemble and to one another was always notable.

3.2.3 Almost every rehearsal observed constituted an effective session of valuable learning by the pupils.

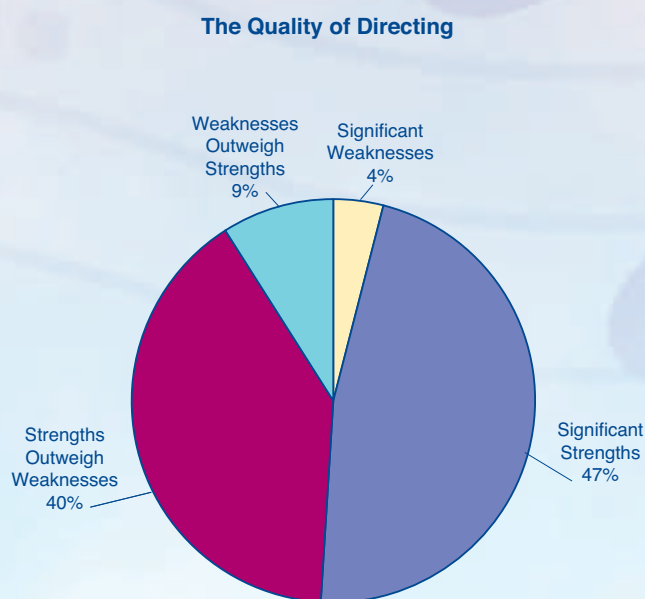
**The Quality of the Pupils' Responses in Ensemble Work**



Commonly, the pupils arrived early and warmed up individually in readiness, and then engaged in the work with enthusiasm and concentrated effort. They waited patiently while the conductor worked with other players, sometimes rehearsing their own part silently. In the best instances, and especially in the less junior ensembles, they were learning to follow the conductor's interpretative gestures, and their response to explanations and

requests showed their growing musical understanding of the piece and the expressive techniques it demanded. In some small ensembles, and some of the more senior large groups, the players were developing an evident sense of teamwork and corporate responsibility for the performance. In a minority of the rehearsals, the pupils' musical and aural capacity was developed by such means as singing their parts before playing them, playing by ear or playing from memory. During most rehearsals, the players showed clear evidence of improving instrumental control and fluency in reading. 'Mock' performances reached good standards for the players' age and stage of development. A significant strength in a majority of the sessions, an outcome of the conductor's aim for effective performance, was the players' improving confidence and musical sensitivity; in the best examples, the players were gaining a clear feel for appropriately stylistic playing.

3.2.4 Most rehearsals were well planned to make the most effective use of a limited amount of time.



Directors and coaches organised the activities in a logical sequence, and generally created a feeling of pace and progression while conveying a sense of enjoyment. They usually gave satisfactory attention to the differing

needs of sections and individuals as well as to the group as a whole, and managed to keep the emphasis strongly on playing rather than explaining. In some cases, effective demonstration helped pupils to catch the nuances intended. Words of encouragement were frequent in most rehearsals; many directors were skilled in matching praise with clearly focused criticism in order to increase the players' understanding and bring about improvement. There were a few notable examples of discussion which encouraged the pupils to evaluate their own playing or identify what they needed to work on at home.

3.2.5 The quality of the ensemble work, and the growth of musicianship evident in the pupils, owed much to the conducting and directing skills of the person leading the rehearsal. While the levels of these skills varied, most conductors and sectional coaches had a firm appreciation of the need to treat the players as fellow musicians and avoid a 'teacher-pupil' atmosphere. Where this was insufficiently achieved, attention to wrong notes and rhythms sometimes gave the impression of correcting an exercise, and the ultimate fulfilment of enjoyable performance was too remote. At other times, the director facilitated musical activity, but underemphasized the development of musicianship and technique, relying on simple repetition to bring about improvement. More often, a satisfactory balance was achieved between correcting detail, improving tone and intonation, and listening for coherence within the ensemble. In the best instances, focus on the musical meaning of the piece helped the players to develop their skills in dramatic playing and to experience the rewards of expressive and stylish performance. Where the players' ability to watch and respond could be seen to be developing well, skilled conductors were relying heavily on communicative gesture to control pulse, phrasing and expression, aided only where appropriate by verbal support. It is important for services to support opportunities for staff to develop and continue to refine their skills in conducting and rehearsing.

3.2.6 Other key factors which influenced the quality of the ensemble work related to repertoire and to staffing. Most groups were learning to play a variety of pieces which they found appealing, some (but not all) of which were technically or musically demanding. Many were also tackling a piece in a style which was initially unfamiliar to most of the players, so contributing to the broadening of their experience and appreciation. A notable strength

of some groups was the shared understanding among the staff involved of the music itself and the rehearsal plans. Sectional rehearsals were well focused to complement and support intentions for the next full rehearsal; and some tutors were able to coach and support effectively during full rehearsals, rather than simply sitting-in. Sometimes, the preparation necessary to promote such shared work was recognised as making an important contribution to the tutors' own development and sense of corporacy.

- 3.2.7 In the performances observed during the survey, the players created an excellent atmosphere through good deportment on the platform, strong concert discipline and a sense of collective responsibility. A varied programme of music had been chosen and well prepared. Where performances were directed by a conductor, the players' response was generally good. The standard of playing was always satisfactory for the stage the pupils had reached, and often very good; pleasing tone, and expressive and exciting performances, were not uncommon from groups at all levels. When weaknesses were evident, they most often concerned the more advanced concepts of stylistic performance, for example in baroque or medieval music. Occasionally, performances included music the players had learned by ear or composed themselves. Smaller groups were developing a mature sense of ensemble and balance, and soloists displayed musical sensitivity, even at the early stages of learning.

## 4. SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

- 4.1 The provision of instrumental music tuition is conceived primarily as a service to the schools and potentially for all pupils. In addition, the services support schools in a variety of other ways. Each organises a variety of events involving large numbers of other pupils of all abilities in musical performance. The services often provide a platform for schools' musical groups at their own performances. In some schools, the tutors assist with the training of these school ensembles; in others they aid or advise teachers in arranging music, and often help the pupils with the parts during their lesson. Tutors also sometimes promote links between pupils or schools and community music groups.
- 4.2 A small part of the work of each service entails concert-giving to pupils in school. Performances by tutor ensembles - and on occasions by central pupil ensembles - add significantly to schools' opportunities to introduce their pupils to live performance. While these performances are well received, there is scope for this service to develop, both in the extent to which it is provided and through matching a presentation to the school's curricular needs. This wider use of the tutors' expertise also provides a valuable opportunity for them to maintain and continue to develop the skills which they are teaching to the pupils.
- 4.3 Links with schools and with music in the curriculum are greatly facilitated where the music service's responsibility includes primary and post-primary curricular support. Even where this is not the case, however, the services endeavour to build links between the instrumental service and classroom support, for example through in-service training, and in shared projects for pupils. At its best, the music service is itself seen as part of the board's Curriculum, Advisory and Support Service (CASS) and contributes clearly towards the formulation and the achievement of its strategic aims.



## 5. ORGANISATION

### 5.1 MANAGEMENT

- 5.1.1 Each service has a public statement of its aims and intentions; these are broadly similar. They focus on providing opportunities for pupils to develop a love and understanding of music through learning to perform individually and together, so enhancing the quality of their own lives and that of their school and the wider community. The services endeavour, as far as resources permit, to provide equality of access for as many pupils as possible, to identify individual potential and to develop it to the full. In this they recognise an objective shared with the schools; they seek, with differing degrees of emphasis, to build strong partnerships with them.
- 5.1.2 The services are managed efficiently, and present an ethos of continuous review and improvement. In each, the head of service provides strong leadership and is supported by senior managers who are hardworking and effective. In recent years they have exploited increasingly systematic and efficient approaches to planning. They have developed, or are developing, business plans which set their work clearly in the context of their board's strategic aims. In the best instances, these have been expanded into action plans which set timescales, specify resources and delegate responsibilities for shared development. Recent work by some small, focused action teams, given time to devise improvement initiatives, has been particularly effective, not only in taking forward agreed priority areas but also in building skills in collegial management. The services seek to balance the need to deliver a guaranteed minimum teaching year with the need to engage in other activities such as curriculum development, extending tutors' teaching skills, researching repertoire and rehearsing and performing music to support schools. They adopt different attitudes to this challenge, but each demonstrates a clear view of areas for further development. Priorities in individual boards include extension into choral and chamber music, diversifying provision to include music in popular and other cultural styles, and improving managerial skills.
- 5.1.3 The staff in each of the services work hard to achieve a corporate ethos, and display a high level of commitment. Despite the large geographical area which most of them have to cover, they maintain a clear sense of

identity and level of professional collegiality. The pressure to serve as many schools and teach as many pupils as possible militates against non-teaching activities, but the services work, with some variation in the degree of their success, to compensate for the isolated nature of the work. Communications are generally good, and most services make provision not only for senior management personnel but also for departmental or regional teams to meet on a reasonably regular basis. It is important for them to conserve time for such important activities as developing corporate approaches, in-service training, analysing statistics to aid evaluation, and maintaining the good communications and co-operation which the services have established with one other. Such opportunities for staff to work together have contributed greatly to the good relationships, mutual respect and high degree of commitment which characterise each of the services.

- 5.1.4 Since the implementation of a national curriculum for music, developing similar support for instrumental teaching has been a concern in music services across the UK. The Northern Ireland services have contributed to this debate. Most have begun to devise schemes of work to provide breadth and balance in their teaching within instrumental groups and consistency across the service as a whole. Some have produced effective and enjoyable materials of their own to support such coherence. The services are well placed to continue this work as they evaluate recently published materials which have been developed nationally.

## **5.2 STAFF DEPLOYMENT**

- 5.2.1 The Education and Library Boards' recurrent resources are determined by the Department of Education. The budget which each allocated to its music service in 2001-02 was between just over £0.5m and just over £1m, or between 0.26% and 0.61% of the board's total budget. Over the last four years, each service's core funding has either risen very minimally, remained static or declined. For some, the deterioration of instrument stock is becoming a serious problem. The services were raising between 9% and 35% of their total budget through contributory charges for tuition, and also for instrument hire and/or participation in ensemble activities. The majority of the services see income generation as increasingly important as core funding falls behind inflation. Charges to schools for the tuition ranged from £7-10 per hour.



5.2.2 Each board determines the size of its music service in response to factors, some historical, which differ according to its context. There were 144 tutors teaching in the schools, about one-third of whom were employed part-time; this was equivalent in total to 114.5 full-time tutors (FTE). There were significant variations from board to board: the number of tutors ranged from 24-34 (FTE 18.3- 28.3); and the average number of pupils taught by each tutor (PTR) was 94.7, but varied from board to board between extremes of 58.9 and 121.2. There was no consistent relationship between the sizes of a board's school population and its music service, or the outcomes in terms of the number or the proportion of its pupils who were taught, or the number of pupils taught per tutor. By and large, the staffing reflected a logical instrumental balance, but the deployment of tutors did not always reflect this logic consistently to ensure balanced ensembles in schools.

5.2.3 The length of each school visit usually related to the number of pupils to be taught. However, the pressures placed on tutors by the numbers of schools and pupils they were required to cover varied considerably across the services. In a single day, tutors could visit from one to eight schools - between seven and 27 in each week. 14% of the tutors' daily visits were to five or more locations; and one-fifth of the full time tutors taught in 20 or more schools each week. The tutors' workloads were heaviest where the school population was greatest and most widespread. While the provision of tuition to smaller schools necessarily implies shorter visits, the workload of over one-fifth of the tutors was poorly balanced or unreasonably heavy.

### **5.3 STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

Almost all the tutors had a relevant musical qualification; just under 30% of those teaching in schools were recognised as qualified teachers. The services give varying degrees of emphasis to continued staff development. Most tutors had undertaken relevant in-service training in the last three years, though almost half of the part-time tutors had had no such recent experience. Most full-time tutors are expected to teach some instruments outside their main specialism, and many have benefited from opportunities to consult and learn from their specialist colleagues. In some services, team-building activity and management training have been effective; other helpful areas of whole staff focus have included child protection training,

relevant musical information and communication technology (ICT), and an externally validated instrumental teaching qualification. A valuable development in recent years has been the increasing provision for co-operative inter-board activity. During the survey, all the tutors attended an excellent staff development day devoted to developing improvisational skills, which was led by nationally respected professionals.

#### **5.4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Each service reports annually on its performance to the Board. The data collected and the extent of analysis, whether for public release or regular internal evaluation, vary considerably. Consideration of trends over time and comparisons with national averages are helping management teams to evaluate the quality of their achievements. At its best, the monitoring process is beginning to progress beyond economic and statistical detail. Most services monitor the work in each school through a formal system of evaluating progress and the support which it provides. Most are also seeking ways to take account of the views of parents and schools. Management teams should continue to review their key performance measures and their comparative importance in demonstrating the quality of their service.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The services are well led, and senior staff provide the service head with valuable and effective support. There are shared aspirations to continuous improvement and to broadening the provision to meet the needs and interests of all pupils. Unequal funding, which does not relate consistently to service size, potential costs or expected outcomes, leads to major differences in provision and outworking in each board. The services recognise the need to present all children who wish to learn to play a musical instrument with the opportunity to do so, but cannot provide for the demand in most of the 65% of Northern Ireland's schools which currently have access to the tuition. Lesson charges deter some pupils from taking tuition, and differences in charging arrangements further promote inequality of access. Instrument allocation to schools does not always promote the formation of balanced ensembles.

The boards, in conjunction with the Department of Education, should consider the financial provision needed for the following options, and agree action to:

- improve pupils' equality of access; and
- extend their work to match current demand; or
- expand activities to cater for a wider range pupils with other musical interests.

Music services should consider the options for and implications of:

- large group tuition;
- improving instrumental balance in schools;
- improving the balance between tutors' teaching time and that which supports other work; and
- determining suitable quality criteria by which to evaluate their work.

- 6.2 The tutors are highly committed and professional in their approach. Much of the tuition is of a high quality. The pupils are generally progressing suitably, and the quality of their learning is often good. Weaknesses in some tutors' teaching are areas in which others excel: the services are well placed to share and develop their existing expertise. A minority of lessons

are undesirably short. There are extreme differences in PTR, and over one-fifth of the tutors have a poorly balanced or unreasonably heavy workload.

Music services should review:

- the length of lessons, in order to meet the needs of all pupils; and
- the pressures of tutors' workloads.

Tutors should develop their skills in:

- harnessing and nurturing pupils' aural skills; and
- inclusive and effective group teaching.

6.3 The schools value highly the contribution the services make to their pupils' development and to school life and identity. A large majority communicate regularly with the tutors and support their pupils well; many monitor their progress appropriately. Lessons are often given in unsuitable accommodation. Generally, good use is made of the tutors' specialist expertise to support schools' musical needs in other ways.

Music services, in conjunction with the schools, should continue to develop their partnership:

- in selecting pupils for tuition;
- in monitoring pupils' progress and sharing information with parents; and
- in ensuring suitable teaching spaces.

6.4 The well-organised hierarchy of ensembles provides the pupils with vital musical training of good quality, and valuable opportunities for social development. The ensembles contribute to musical life in the community, and the players act as excellent ambassadors for their board and for Northern Ireland.

## APPENDIX 1

### SCHOOLS VISITED

Abercorn Primary School  
Ballee High School  
Ballygolan Primary School  
Ballyholme Primary School  
Ballykelly Primary School  
Banbridge Academy  
Belfast High School  
Belfast Model School for Girls  
Cambridge House Grammar School  
Carr's Glen Primary School  
Christian Brothers Grammar School, Omagh  
Corpus Christi College  
Down High School  
Downpatrick Primary School  
Drumahoe Primary School  
Dungannon Primary School  
Enniskillen Collegiate  
Enniskillen High School  
Fairview Primary School  
Forge Integrated Primary School  
Fort Hill College  
Greenisland Primary School  
Holy Trinity Primary School, Enniskillen  
Irvinestown Primary School  
Jones Memorial Primary School  
Knockbreda Primary School  
Laurelhill Community College  
Legamaddy Primary School  
Lisburn Central Primary School  
Lumen Christi College  
Lurgan College  
Maghaberry Primary School  
Newbuildings Primary School  
Newry High School  
Omagh County Primary School  
Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School, Belfast  
Our Lady & St Patrick's College  
Primate Dixon Primary School  
Rosetta Primary School  
Slemish College  
St Anne's Primary School, Strabane  
St Caireall's Primary School  
St Catherine's College  
St Colman's Primary School, Lambeg  
St Colman's High School, Strabane  
St Comhghall's High  
St Dallan's Primary School  
St Fanchea's High School  
St John the Baptist Boys' Primary School  
St John's Primary School, Coleraine  
St Joseph's Primary School, Ballymena  
St Louis Primary School, Ballymena  
St Malachy's High School, Antrim  
St Mary's Grammar School  
St Mary's High School, Lurgan  
St Mary's Primary School, Draperstown  
St Michael's College  
St Michael's Primary School, Belfast  
St Patrick's Primary School, Holywood  
St Patrick's & St Brigid's High School  
St Ronan's Primary School Newry  
Convent Grammar School, Strabane  
Stranmillis Primary School  
Wellington College

## APPENDIX 2

### QUESTIONNAIRE TO PARENTS

I strongly agree/agree/neither agree nor disagree/disagree/strongly disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am satisfied with the information I receive from music service about tuition.					
I am satisfied with the information I receive from music service about ensembles.					
I am satisfied with the quality of the teaching the child receives.					
The length, frequency and timing of the lessons are appropriate.					
My child is keen to learn the instrument.					
My child enjoys the lessons.					
My child is making satisfactory progress.					
I am satisfied with the information I receive about my child's progress.					
I am satisfied with the extent of my child's involvement with others in music making, in and outside school.					



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