

Inspecting post-16 music with guidance on self-evaluation

HMI 317

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Reference number: HMI 317

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Introduction

This booklet aims to help inspectors and staff in schools and colleges to evaluate standards and quality in music for students post-16. It complements the *Handbook for Inspecting Secondary Schools* (1999), the supplement *Inspecting School Sixth Forms* (2001) and the *Handbook for Inspecting Colleges* (2001). It replaces the earlier guidance *Inspecting Subjects and Aspects 11–18* (1999).

This guidance concentrates on issues specific to music. General guidance is in the *Handbooks*. Use both to get a complete picture of the inspection or evaluation process.

This booklet is concerned with evaluating standards and achievement, teaching and learning, and other factors that affect what is achieved. It outlines how to use students' work and question them, the subject-specific points to look for in lessons, and how to draw evaluations together to form a coherent view of the subject.

Examples are provided of evidence and evaluations from college and school sixth-form inspections, with commentaries to give further explanation. These examples are included without any reference to context, and will not necessarily illustrate all of the features that inspectors will need to consider. The booklets in the series show different ways of recording and reporting evidence and findings; they do not prescribe or endorse any particular method or approach.

Inspectors and senior staff in schools and colleges may need to evaluate several subjects and refer to more than one booklet. You can download any of the subject guidance booklets from OFSTED's website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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OFSTED's remit for this sector is the inspection of education for students aged 16–19, other than work-based education. In schools, this is the sixth-form provision. In colleges, the 16–19 age-group will not be so clearly identifiable; classes are likely to include older students and, in some cases, they will have a majority of older students. In practice, inspectors and college staff will evaluate the standards and quality in these classes regardless of the age of the students.

In schools, the courses you are most likely to encounter are:

- General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced level (A-level) music and music technology;
- Intermediate General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in performing arts, delivered with an emphasis on popular music.

In colleges, in addition to these, you are likely to find:

- First (level two) and National (level three) Diplomas in performing arts, and its subdivisions (music, popular music and music technology), and
- access to higher education courses (level three), validated by a regional consortium as part of the Open Colleges Network, in popular music and music technology.

As part of a vocational course, students may take music theory and practical grade examinations, for example those offered by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), or by Trinity College London, including the 'Rockschool' series and the new ABRSM jazz piano graded examinations.

This booklet concentrates on the most commonly found courses in or related to music for students 16–19. However, the principles illustrated in this guidance can be applied more widely.

Common requirements

All inspectors share the responsibility for determining whether a school or college is effective for all its students, whatever their educational needs or personal circumstances. As part of this responsibility, ensure that you have a good understanding of the key characteristics of the institution and its students. Evaluate the achievement of different groups of students and judge how effectively their needs and aspirations are met and any initiatives or courses aimed specifically at these groups of students. Take account of recruitment patterns, retention rates and attendance patterns for programmes and courses for different groups of students. Consider the individual goals and targets set for students within different groups and the progress they make towards achieving them.

You should be aware of the responsibilities and duties of schools and colleges regarding equal opportunities, in particular those defined in the Sex Discrimination Act 1957, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. These Acts and related codes of practice underpin national policies on inclusion, on raising achievement and on the important role schools and colleges have in fostering better personal, community and race relations, and in addressing and preventing racism.¹

As well as being thoroughly familiar with subject-specific requirements, be alert to the unique contribution that each subject makes to the wider educational development of students. Assess how well the curriculum and teaching in music enable all students to develop key skills, and how successfully the subject contributes to the students' personal, social, health and citizenship education, and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Judge how effectively the subject helps prepare students aged 16–19 for adult life in a culturally and ethnically diverse society.

¹ See Annex *Issues for Inspection arising from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (Macpherson Report)* in *Evaluating Educational Inclusion*, OFSTED, 2000, p13.

1 Standards and achievement

1.1 Evaluating standards and achievement

From the previous inspection report, find out what you can about standards and achievement at that time. This will give you a point of comparison with the latest position, but do not forget that there is a trail of performance data, year by year. Analyse and interpret the performance data available for students who have recently completed the course(s). Draw on the school's *Pre-Inspection Context and School Indicator* (PICSi) report or, in the case of a college, the *College Performance Report*. Also analyse the most recent results provided by the school or college and any value-added information available. When numbers are small, exercise caution in making comparisons with national data or, for example, evaluating trends. For further guidance on interpreting performance data and analysing value added, refer to *Inspecting School Sixth Forms*, the *Handbook for Inspecting Colleges* and the *National Summary Data Report for Secondary Schools*.

Where you can, form a view about the standards achieved by different groups of students. For example, there may be data which enable you to compare how male and female students or different ethnic groups are doing, or how well 16–19-year-old students achieve in relation to older students.

Make full use of other information which has a bearing on standards and achievement, including success in completing courses, targets and their achievement, and other measures of success.

You should interpret, in particular:

- trends in results;
- comparisons with other subjects and courses;
- distributions of grades, particularly the occurrence of high grades;
- value-added information;
- the relative performance of male and female students;
- the performance of minorities and different ethnic groups;
- trends in the popularity of courses;
- drop-out or retention rates;
- students' destinations, where data are available.

On the basis of the performance data and other pre-inspection evidence, form hypotheses about the standards achieved, whether they are as high as they should be, and possible explanations. Follow up your hypotheses through observation and analysis of students' work and talking with them. Direct inspection evidence tells you about the standards at which the current students are working, and whether they are being sufficiently stretched to achieve as well as they should. If the current standards are at odds with what the performance data suggest, you must find out why and explain the differences carefully.

As you observe students in lessons, look at their work and talk to them, you should concentrate on the extent to which they:

- recall and use their knowledge of different musical repertoires, genres, styles, traditions and historical contexts to demonstrate their understanding of music;
- explore, improvise and invent music, understanding how to use conventions appropriately;
- recognise and use the creative potential of technology such as keyboards, synthesisers, sequencers and computer programs effectively and appreciate when such technology may be inappropriate;
- show a suitably professional discipline in their use of music technology equipment and recording studios;
- when creating music through the medium of computers, show both the necessary familiarity with hardware and software, and an appropriate level of musical acuity;
- use relevant notations to plan, revise and refine material;
- compose, direct or perform, developing different interpretations which express their own ideas and feelings;
- discuss methods they have used to compose, direct, perform, record, edit and produce music;
- listen critically, identify musical features and talk meaningfully about music they hear, justifying their views with examples;

- follow, challenge and modify musical characteristics and conventions to develop their own musical style;
- use their knowledge, skills and understanding of music and music technology in an appropriate range of situations;
- make comparisons between music of different cultures or traditions, recognising and explaining similarities and differences;
- discriminate between different performances;
- take increasing responsibility for their own learning by listening to, reading about, performing, composing and studying music and its recording, editing and production to extend their knowledge and understanding.

One aspect of vocational courses in music is a requirement for students to gain an understanding of the industry. When observing a lesson for a vocational course, therefore, you will need to judge how the students use their musical skills, knowledge and understanding in an industrial context – for example, in recording and producing a CD. The course should include opportunities for students to have first-hand performance or studio production experience in a professional situation.

In the performance studies A level, the focus is on the understanding of the genres that link the different art forms. You will need to consider how students are helped to appreciate opera, dance and musical theatre – for example, through creating their own pieces or by taking part in performances of such pieces/works.

There will be examples of students who have passed Associated Board or other instrumental examinations. These test students' standards of performance and may be considered as factors in your overall judgements about standards and achievement. However, there is no firm correlation between particular grade levels awarded in these examinations and the national expectations for AS and A level.

1.2 Analysis of students' work

Record the evidence of the students' standards and achievement and the quality of the teaching. Remember that the analysis of work is important for judging the nature of the demands made on the students and their progress over time. Hence, it can give particularly valuable insights into their achievement.

Example 1: evidence from work of an AS-level music student in an FE college (towards end of Autumn term); obtained a C grade in GCSE; a good performer (grade VI viola player and sings alto in madrigal group).

- Her folder of work includes notes on the area of study, harmony exercises, research work and some composition sketches.
- The file is well organised and is already quite substantial, indicating both a methodical and an industrious approach.
- In addition to printed notes given by the teacher, she has researched a considerable amount of related information from the Internet – eg, on different approaches to use of motif: musical examples quoted from Handel (instrumental), Beethoven (symphony) and Wagner (leitmotif).
- Her 'Handel' pastiche demonstrates a growing understanding of his use of counterpoint. The fragment successfully uses motif and develops two short ideas in contrapuntal style. There is also an unfinished sketch in which she has tried to change and develop the two phrases in the style of Hindemith, this time with less success and without evaluation.
- The four-part harmony exercises indicate that she has a reasonable grasp of primary and secondary triads but is unadventurous with her selection of harmonies and inversions, which results in somewhat stilted bass lines and melodies and, consequently, erratic inner parts, despite her experience singing madrigals. She has not yet fully got to grips with consecutives and some of the more sophisticated conventions – eg, suspensions.
- The main weakness is the lack of evidence of her own ideas and opinions about the repertoire she is studying and the lack of written reflection/evaluation of the work she has done.
- The standard of the work suggests that the student is working towards a C at AS Level.

[Attainment average (4)]

Commentary

The student shows a satisfactory approach to the concept of motif and its use by different composers, in different contexts and for different purposes. She has tried to illustrate her understanding in her compositions and has been partly successful, but she has not been able to comment on what she was trying to do. This shows that her true understanding is not secure. She is still learning to apply the rules of formal harmony, which were not required for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), but she does have a basic knowledge of major and minor tonalities. Her research work has provided her with a good background of relevant information but, again, she does not capitalise on it by relating it to the music she has heard or studied.

Considering the student's starting point (minimum GCSE threshold) her achievement, on the evidence of her folder of work at this stage of her first term in the college, appears to be satisfactory. She has some strengths (eg, extent and range of research and developing grasp of pastiche) but also some weaknesses, mainly the limitations in her ability to reflect on and evaluate her work.

This evaluation will need to be set alongside evidence from other students, representing the range of ability in the year group, before it can contribute to the overall judgements on attainment and achievement.

Example 2: evidence from analysis of some composition coursework by 3 second year students in an FE college; on an advanced level popular music course validated by the Open College Network.

Each student's work comprises three elements recorded on CD: an advertising jingle, a TV drama soundtrack and a soundtrack for a play.

- The context of each piece is thoroughly described in written production notes, a descriptive account and, in most cases, with some visual illustration.
- The students have been creative in devising products for the advertising jingle. One of them has used an amusingly satirical tone in the supporting material, showing an alert and sceptical view of the context of such work. His TV context is more conventional but intelligently deployed.
- This student's advertising jingle is amusing and lively but not entirely effective, because he could not take seriously the product he was seeking to enhance. He has subverted it rather than selling it in the ironic mode he was seeking.
- The notes for the theatrical soundtrack for two students show a productive use of their contacts in a local amateur dramatic society.
- The writing is literate, interesting and mostly realistic in its view of the possibilities and limitations of this sort of composing. There are some good insights into the necessary constraints of writing for the theatre. The students have learnt much from the assignment about the costs and constraints of composing and recording, as well as the creative possibilities of such work.
- Each student's TV and theatrical soundtracks are for one key event in each; the events are well chosen for their creative possibilities. For example, one student has one involving the rapid build-up of tension and the other the establishment of a more generally sinister atmosphere.
- One student has used her own guitar playing in her TV soundtrack, which she has recorded and edited herself. She has added a drum track and the bass. The recording is of a reasonable quality. The music is effective and deliberately derivative – it utilises guitar pedals to create a sound reminiscent of a 1970s TV or film thriller.
- This student's theatrical soundtrack is more spare and thoughtful; she has recorded her own acoustic guitar playing, supported it with a restrained use of synthesised strings and experimented successfully with a synthesised bass clarinet.
- The standard of the work suggests that at least two of the students deserve a distinction in this part of the course for the composition and realisation of original music in a commercial context. All have good literacy key skills at level 3.

None of these students had formal musical qualifications at the start of the course. Their achievement seems excellent.

[Attainment well above average (2)]

Commentary

The students show a mature and lively approach to their choice of cultural and commercial contexts for their compositions, and they have gone to some lengths to create and describe them. Some show initiative in contacting their local amateur dramatic society. The musical ideas are mature, economical and show originality. Ideas are competently played and recorded. The guitar-playing student has shown skill in choosing live and synthesised sounds. She has been careful to work within resource and personal limitations, while achieving an interesting and enjoyable result. Her playing is competent and she uses the synthesiser sparingly and effectively. One jingle, while being successful as an example of composition and recording, is not at the same standard as the other pieces, because the student has not sufficiently respected the context for which he was writing. It is difficult to sell something by sending it up, but it is a sign of the student's cultural maturity and creative independence that he has tried to do so. These students write more fluently and accurately than many vocational music students.

1.3 Talking with students

Your judgements must be made in the light of the expectations for each course, but the following are useful questions to consider when you are talking to students about their work.

- *Do students use musical terminology appropriately, accurately and with confidence?*
- *Do they illustrate their understanding by singing or playing examples and by referring to a range of relevant repertoires?*
- *Do they reflect critically on their work and see new possibilities?*
- *Are they able to transfer ideas from one context to another and apply learned techniques to achieve different purposes?*
- *Do they demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the chosen area of study through their listening critiques, their composing and their performing?*
- *Are they able to articulate and express their own views and theories?*
- *Do they show an enthusiasm for music they have heard and studied and a curiosity and desire for further study?*

It is sometimes helpful for students to be able to demonstrate their understanding by using a computer or by singing or playing. So you should arrange to meet them in an appropriate place – for example, a room with a keyboard or one where they can use their instrument or a computer.

Example 3: evidence from a discussion with 2 Year 12 students following the A-level music course in a school sixth-form.

- *The students have been studying the use of the seventh chord and chromaticism in different styles and cultural contexts, and have completed a jazz improvisation, several compositions and an essay comparing features and characteristics of two French composers – Satie and Debussy. The conversation follows the recording of their compositions in the style of Satie's Gymnopédies.*
- *The students speak very enthusiastically about the brief they have been given. They quickly demonstrate on a keyboard the sequence of chords they have each chosen. They are able to describe key features of the genre (slow-moving, chords with the added seventh, smooth, legato melody, dreamy, reflective mood) and both make apposite references to other works (Ravel La Valse and Debussy L'après midi d'un faune).*
- *When discussing the merits of their own compositions, they recognise that, although both have a satisfying structure and use the genre successfully, the melody of one of the pieces is more effective in its use of chromaticism. During the discussion, they are both able to suggest how improvements could be made. They are also able to improvise a new melody using chromaticism over another sequence of chords which I provided, but one at greater length and with more confidence than the other.*
- *They both demonstrate a high level of understanding and are able to talk about the way their work has progressed during the year. This suggests very good achievement.*

[Attainment well above average (2)]

Commentary

The students have a firm grasp of the area of study and have clearly gained a great deal of insight into style and convention from the use of pastiche employed by the teacher. They are used to modelling different styles to enhance their appreciation of the music they study and are confident in their use of appropriate technical language. Their performing skills enable them to demonstrate a high level of understanding and they are clearly inspired and motivated by their teacher who works alongside them. They are able to apply what they have learnt to the new context, showing a growth in the sophistication of their knowledge. Their attainment, together with the evidence of enthusiastic and committed progress, points to very good achievement.

Example 4: evidence from discussion with 5 members of a band comprising students in an FE college; on an Intermediate GNVQ performing arts course, described as a 'popular music' course.

- The students have put together a programme of five songs for their contribution to a live gig, to be held the following week; they are taking a break in rehearsal.
- The students, relying heavily on one more assertive member, have chosen an appropriate programme of soul/R&B songs, utilising two available vocalists in the band.
- The students have little knowledge of the venue, or the likely audience, and are unsure and not very confident about the performance circumstances.
- The band members have collaborated effectively, with one exception, in planning a rehearsal schedule and agreeing the programme; the exception was the drummer who merely indicated that he played what and when the others told him to.
- The students have only a general idea how they are being assessed, and what they have to do in order to do well at the assignment.
- The students show an appropriate knowledge of popular music forms and styles; they understand how to build tension and excitement, and create contrast, both in their arrangements and playing, and in the sequencing of the programme.
- One student – saxophone player – is absent. He is described as having missed several lessons and rehearsals.
- During the discussion, there is some progress in making one song more effective by simplifying the arrangement and agreeing to spend more time on the backing vocals; these improvements are briefly but competently demonstrated by the keyboard player, after some lengthy and unproductive discussion.
- An older member of the group makes use of her greater experience without dominating or inhibiting the others; she is a fully integrated member of the band.

The group is coping quite well with the absence of the sixth member of the band although, understandably, they are beginning to lose patience with him and there is talk of 'throwing him out'.

[Attainment average (4)]

Commentary

The students are sufficiently well informed about the musical style they have chosen to perform in to be able to make sensible repertoire choices and to select songs and arrangements to suit their band. They still have much to establish and consider about the venue and performance circumstances, if they are to perform well for a particular audience. The band works well together, evidently with the exception of the saxophone player. The students show a good standard of maturity and collaborative working for an Intermediate level course. However, they do not have a clear enough understanding of the actual assignment, how it will be assessed, and its place in the whole course.

1.4 Lesson observation

Example 5: evidence from an AS music lesson in the third term in a school sixth-form; 4 students, all of whom passed GCSE (one with a C and the other 3 with grade D) and intend to extend their studies next year to complete the A level.

Teacher's plans indicate learning objectives as 1. 'Understand triads and their names' 2. 'Use and apply knowledge of consecutive rules in harmony, using published textbook'.

All four students can explain the concept of a triad and have some idea of the relationship between the primary chords (tonic, sub-dominant and dominant), although initially the teacher has to prompt and remind them. Only one (the piano player) is able to demonstrate them with any degree of fluency and then only in the keys of C and G. He is less secure when asked to play primary triads in E major and D minor. They all recognise the different key signatures after laborious 'workings out'. The teacher spends some time recapping, presenting examples and getting the students to analyse the chords, gradually adding to the difficulty by introducing first and second inversions in different keys. He further increases the challenge by speeding up his demands for responses, eventually leading to a string of quick-fire questions. The students make rapid improvement.

Three of the four students make rudimentary errors in their harmony. Despite 'knowing' the rules about consecutives, they fail to recognise them in the exercises they have completed, either when they look at their written work or when the teacher plays them through. The keyboard player is more accurate and has begun to use passing notes and decoration with more fluency.

Attainment is below average for this stage in the course, but the learning and progress they make in this lesson, and their attainment in relation to their attainment before they started the course, suggest that their achievement is satisfactory.

[Attainment below average (5)]

Commentary

The students respond well in the lesson, making rapid progress despite the weaknesses in their knowledge and understanding. Considering that basic triads and harmony will have been covered in Key Stage 4 and that this is nearly at the end of the AS course, attainment is below what would be expected. However, in view of their low GCSE grades and the good progress in this lesson, this indicates satisfactory achievement.

2 Teaching and learning

2.1 Evaluating teaching and learning

Interpret the *Handbook* criteria with specific reference to music and keep in mind the characteristics of effective teaching and learning, in which:

- through choice of a varied, relevant repertoire and the teacher's own enthusiasm and secure command of music, students are helped to develop a wide-ranging and broadly based knowledge and understanding of, and enthusiasm for, music of different styles and from different traditions and cultures (*subject knowledge, planning, resources, methodology*);
- through the teacher's carefully structured planning, clear explanations and demonstrations and focused listening and discussion, students improve their skills, develop insight and extend their understanding and appreciation of the music they study (*subject knowledge, planning, methodology*);
- because the teacher encourages performances and compositions of high musical quality, students constantly strive to improve their work, reach high standards and enjoy the feeling of success and achievement (*subject knowledge, expectations*);
- because of the teacher's skilled demonstration, choice of good examples and penetrating questioning, students are able to analyse the music they hear, to play and to compose; they internalise and memorise the music, give informed views and opinions on it, and use it to improve their own music-making (*subject knowledge, planning, resources, challenge, methodology*);
- as a result of the teacher's accomplished and imaginative rehearsal techniques, students are helped to perform proficiently, with detailed attention to different interpretation, expression and subtleties of mood and purpose (*subject knowledge, expectations, methodology, assessment*);
- through a well-planned, active curriculum, students are heavily involved with the processes of making music – performing, composing, directing, listening and appraising – and are given appropriate opportunities to practise, consolidate, rehearse and refine their skills (*planning, methodology, assessment*);
- by encouraging the use of information technology, the teacher helps students to experiment with a wider range of instrumental colour and more complex techniques in their composing and performing (*subject knowledge, methodology, resources*);
- the teacher's thoughtful and incisive assessments and the way students are encouraged to evaluate their own work throughout the course lead to students making rapid progress in all aspects of their learning (*assessment*).

Be alert to teaching which may have superficially positive features but which lacks the rigour, depth, insights and the command of good subject teaching. Examples might be teaching in which:

- the discussion about the music of the set area of study is lively but there is limited exploitation of musical vocabulary, insufficient depth of analysis, not enough attention to subtleties of style and interpretation and little opportunity to apply learning to different music (*subject knowledge, planning, methodology*);
- lessons are conducted at a fast pace but the teacher provides too many of the answers and makes suggestions (for example, for compositions) without allowing students time to think for themselves and come up with their own solutions (*expectations*);
- much of the work is theoretical and, although tackled at a high level of sophistication, does not allow the students practical opportunities to apply their knowledge and consolidate what they have learnt (*methodology*);

- students are encouraged to work industriously, completing written harmony and compositions and analysing music from scores, but without recourse to hearing how the music sounds (*methodology*);
- lessons intended to teach composition are used for general rehearsal, failing adequately to cover composition (*methodology*);
- the teacher and students show enthusiasm for, and knowledge of, the superficial details of musicians, bands, recordings and equipment, but the teacher fails to use this knowledge to deepen students' musical skills or understanding of cultural and professional contexts (*expectations, methodology*).

2.2 Lesson observation

Example 6: evidence from an AS-level music group of high-attaining students in a school sixth-form; 10 students (6M, 4F).

This is an early lesson on popular music and jazz, the area of study. Students listen to and discuss Armstrong's West End Blues and identify jazz characteristics. In pairs, they complete a mapping exercise on the roots of jazz and then do more structured analysis of the blues piece, using information and questions provided by the teacher. Homework is to make own notes on the roots of jazz and how it developed in different places. Plans for a later lesson include students improvising in different jazz styles.

Teaching	Learning
<i>The way in which the teacher asks the students to identify basic features of jazz from the listening and insists that they illustrate their answers with practical, vocal or instrumental examples by ear is very challenging.</i>	<i>As a consequence, the students are absolutely clear about concepts such as rhythmic emphasis, improvisation, call and response and different styles – eg, bebop and modal jazz.</i>
<i>The detailed planning, both in terms of timing and in the cumulative introduction of more and more detailed information, is very well structured and paced to match the previous attainment of the students.</i>	<i>So students are able to apply and consolidate what they know, establish how techniques and conventions are used, and reach a more sophisticated understanding of the development of jazz – eg, the changing role of instruments in New Orleans and Chicago jazz.</i>
<i>Because the teacher facilitates whole-group, paired and individual work, she can assess how well each student is grasping the key ideas and concepts. She uses this very effectively to discuss, prompt, interrogate and affirm what students are thinking.</i>	<i>This leads the students to develop their own ideas and theories as well as learning from each other. They are helped to test out what they think, and find detailed examples to fix the learning in their heads. The male students are particularly quick to play fragments to demonstrate their points. Female students are more tentative – two needing and receiving additional help from the teacher.</i>
<i>The teacher's use of modelling and the excellent relationship she has with the students increases their respect, admiration and enthusiasm.</i>	<i>As a result, most students express their ideas confidently, using appropriate musical vocabulary, picking up new information, ideas and techniques with relish and displaying keen enthusiasm for learning.</i>
<i>The teaching is very good. It encourages an atmosphere of focused study and creative response.</i>	<i>Consequently, the students sustain a high degree of concentration but, at the same time, show enjoyment of the music they hear.</i>
<i>Teacher skilfully uses one (Caribbean) student in the group, who is a gifted jazz piano player, to demonstrate, getting him to explain to the others what he is doing.</i>	<i>This has the effect of extending his learning as well as helping his peers.</i>
[Teaching and learning very good (2)]	

Commentary

Here the teacher's expertise is evident; she is well versed in the different subtleties of style within the genre and explains them well. Her use of modelling and practical demonstration on the keyboard is a particular strength. All the students make very good progress and learn quickly. Two female students, who need additional help, consolidate their understanding because the teacher recognises their difficulties, provides further listening examples and talks them through the analysis. She is also able to challenge the student who is a jazz pianist and take his understanding to a higher level. This very good teaching leads to very successful learning.

Example 7: evidence from a second year A-level music lesson in a sixth-form college; 6 students (4M, 2F).

Discussion and analysis of how Purcell adds realism in the music of Dido and Aeneas. Students have been asked to prepare an example to present to the rest of the group.

(S = strength, W = weakness)

(S) The presentation task is well chosen, giving the students responsibility for their own learning and the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding.

(S) Teacher's good technical knowledge of structures, form, devices and techniques is used well to clarify the different features of the music. Good reference to other repertoire illustrating the same point – eg, similarities between the theatre music of Handel and Purcell.

(S) Good questioning which probes beyond the initial presentations – eg, requiring students to justify their answers from the score.

(S) Fast pace maintained throughout, which challenges and stretches the higher-attaining students.

(W) But proves to be a little too fast for two of the male students, because they have not done any preparation. As a result their learning is less secure.

(S) Good handout on analysis, which gives students new information to apply for themselves.

(S) The teacher involves all the students vocally, getting them to sing through various sections to experience the music first-hand. Progress is more pronounced as a result.

(S) The teacher uses paired work to allow time for higher-attaining students to come up with further examples and for him to work with the two lower-attaining male students, at a pace more appropriate to their learning needs.

(W) Nevertheless, their progress is impeded by the fact that their attitudes are less positive than those of the rest of the group. They have come ill-prepared, not having studied the score and they respond only as a result of a great deal of prompting by the teacher.

[Teaching good (3); learning satisfactory (4)]

Commentary

The teaching is good because the teacher shows very good subject knowledge and understanding of the finer details of topic. The fast pace provides good challenge for the higher-attaining students, who make good progress and contribute well to the questions from the teacher. They show that they have a good understanding of the stylistic conventions of the genre and are able to apply their understanding with confidence and competence to other music. For these students, learning is good. However, the two weaker students are falling behind, clearly lack interest and are reluctant to respond to questions, despite the best efforts of the teacher. Their learning and progress are unsatisfactory because of their casual approach. For this reason, although teaching is undoubtedly good, learning overall in this lesson is only satisfactory.

Example 8: evidence from a Year 12 A-level music lesson in a school sixth-form; only one student, who has recently joined the school to take A-level music but who is considered a weak candidate by the two music teachers, who both teach him.

This lesson concentrates on the set works relating to the area of study. The teacher's objectives are stated as 'listening – building up to A-level standards'. The lesson outline is a list of pieces and exercises to be used.

There are many weaknesses in teaching. Planning is poor. Because of the lack of clear learning objectives, the student is not given a chance to secure his understanding of particular features. For example, having helped the student identify concord and discord in an extract, the teacher misses the opportunity to check on the student's understanding by using another extract or asking him to explain the concepts in his own words.

Questioning is superficial. The teacher readily accepts the student's first answer and does not probe to check for deeper understanding. For example, when the student is adding phrasing to a score, the teacher accepts the answer that there are six phrases but does not check to see where the student has placed them or ask him if there are alternatives which could change the impact of the melody.

Relationships are unsatisfactory. Although the teacher uses a friendly tone, she retains a distance between herself and the student, which is unusually formal for a one-to-one situation. This inhibits the student, who is tentative in his response. Although he has a reasonably good general musical knowledge, the teacher provides answers too quickly and does not allow him to apply what he knows or work things out for himself.

Pace of working is badly managed. The teacher is not sensitive to the student's needs and rushes through parts of the exercises where more consolidation is needed – for example, when the student is unsure of relative tonalities. In addition, the teacher interrupts the lesson at one point to tell the student about a forthcoming concert.

[Teaching and learning poor (6)]

Commentary

In discussion after the lesson, the student demonstrated far more understanding than he had been able to show during the lesson. The lack of clear purpose to the learning and the laborious working through listening exercises prevented any real improvement in the student's appraising skills. Although the teacher clearly knew the music, she did not have the skills of pedagogy to select appropriate teaching strategies and had not prepared additional examples that would allow the student to practise and to become more familiar with how different devices and conventions sound.

Example 9: evidence from a first year lesson in an FE college; students taking the National Diploma in popular music.

The teacher is moving between two bands which are rehearsing in separate studios for an imminent gig. One band consists of drums, bass, guitar, keyboard/lead vocalist and two backing vocalists, one of whom plays congas. The other band consists of drums, bass, two guitars/vocals.

The teacher is very sensitive to the widely differing levels of confidence and skill among the students. He makes sure both bands are ready, leaves the one band to sort out their ideas, sets the other band going and listens to their song right through once. He then discusses with the guitarist a crisper style of playing with upward plectrum strokes, and uses a suggestion from a student who says that it needs to sound like a reggae style of playing, although their song is not in that style. The student tries it out, but makes only a little progress. This is holding the band back. So, the teacher plays the number through with the band, so that they can get the balance right and practise the (difficult) ending. The student, having watched and listened, then tries, with much greater success. As soon as the teacher can see that the guitarist is on track, he moves to the backing vocalists, who lack confidence and have not been singing the harmony well. After a few times through, the backing vocals sound much better, simply because the teacher has encouraged the students to have confidence in their ability and to listen closely to each other. He is very successful at

encouraging the students, while challenging them to achieve more than they thought possible at the start of the lesson. He takes this opportunity to emphasise for all the students the importance of continual eye contact during rehearsal as well as performance.

Teacher then moves to the second band. They are less proficient and lack confidence. After making a few important suggestions to simplify the arrangement and get a better sound balance, he realises that his presence is inhibiting the students. So he leaves them again to work on their own. Under the circumstances, this reflects very good judgement, and these students do make good progress while working on their own.

The first band has also made good progress. The keyboard player and singer is exceptionally able, and the teacher is content to stand and listen, allowing him to improve the song. The drummer chips in with sensible suggestions for the bridge and the ending, to help the musicians move together. By now the song is sounding confident and convincing, and the teacher leaves the band to play it through once again. He tells them that, if they are content with the song before he gets back to them, they should try out some ideas for the next song on the programme.

He returns to the second band – now sounding considerably better – and coaxes some louder singing out of both vocalists. After ten minutes' work, they are both singing much more strongly, and the harmony is back in the chorus. The song now sounds as though it could be ready for performance the following week.

The very rapid progress which both groups have made results from excellent working relationships, good use of resources – the two studios and the equipment – and very good questioning, with effective use of answers. The teacher's expertise is very well used in his guitar playing, his up-to-date knowledge of R&B styles (first band) and his approach to repertoire and performance issues. With both groups, he establishes an excellent professional discipline in the studios, with no time-wasting, and he manages to stop guitarists playing while he – or anyone else – is talking. He explains concisely, forcefully and effectively, and draws the students in to help him do so.

[Teaching and learning excellent (1)]

Commentary

The teacher has succeeded in generating a working environment in which students can be critically supportive of each other's efforts, and help each other to make progress. Time is effectively divided between the two bands, and well used by teacher and students. The students work very effectively in the teacher's absence. At the end of an hour, the teacher has succeeded in improving very considerably the playing and singing of both bands, while making the students feel they have mostly accomplished this themselves. He combines a high level of teaching skill with current practical experience, and he succeeds in challenging the students without inhibiting them. Considerable strengths in methodology, expectations and subject knowledge in particular.

Example 10: evidence from a first year music technology lesson in an FE college.

A small class of seven divided into two groups. The first group works in the recording studio laying out microphones to record the ambient sound in the studio (rather than 'miking up' the individual instruments). The second group works in the control room getting equipment ready to record and giving feedback to the studio group. Appropriate task, putting students in a realistic professional situation and giving them the opportunity to learn through direct experience.

The teacher moves between the groups. He is expert in his use of all the equipment, but wisely makes only general suggestions about positioning the microphones rather than giving precise directions. The first group is slow to make use of his suggestions, and place the microphones too close to the instruments for ambient sound.

The teacher leaves them to experiment and works with the group in the control room. These three students are at very different stages in their familiarity and confidence with the equipment. One student has to be shown in detail how to set up the right channels; he has done little of such work. The teacher starts to explain, but he has not anticipated that this student will need so much support. In order to save time, after ten minutes of very basic instruction to this student, the teacher hands over to a second student, who completes the set-up in a few minutes, tests it and makes the first recording. A third student merely watches all this.

The studio group then come in, listen to the recording that has been made (bass, piano, guitar) and discuss it, with the teacher offering ideas and suggestions but being careful not to present answers too soon. All seven students recognise how the poor balance on the recording is a result of poor positioning of the microphones. The studio group then return to the studio, re-deploy the microphones, and make a much better recording. The teacher asks all the students to note the position of the mikes, but the session has to end before much noting can be done.

[Teaching and learning satisfactory (4)]

Commentary

The session achieves its objectives: with the teacher's support and guidance all students learn more about recording ambient sound, and some of them demonstrate that knowledge by successfully working together in two groups to make a satisfactory ambient recording. The teacher is careful to guide without instructing or preventing the students from making their own discoveries. However, he does not deal successfully with the widely differing levels of skill and knowledge among the students in the control room. Some students are left with little to do for short periods. The learning is not as effective as it could have been.

2.3 Other evidence on teaching and learning

Lesson observation is usually the most important source of evidence on the quality of teaching and learning, but the analysis of work and discussions with students can also yield valuable information. This is particularly important when the work includes a coursework component undertaken over time. Under these circumstances, the observation of individual lessons may give a very partial picture of the students' learning experiences and of the support provided by teachers.

The work analysis will give you a good feel for the overall rate of progress, and, therefore, the pace of the teaching and learning. It will show the range and depth of the work which the students are required to do. For example, it will indicate whether students have been introduced to a wide repertoire of music, whether they are challenged sufficiently to develop the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation and whether they have been taught to relate music to its historical and cultural context.

Discussions with students will give you a sense of their motivation and the range of their experiences. You can ask questions to show whether they understand clearly how well they are doing and what they must do to improve.

3 Other factors affecting quality

Other factors are only significant if they have a noticeable impact on standards, teaching and learning. Note and evaluate any significant features of the curriculum, leadership, management, staffing, accommodation, or resources. The following are examples of considerations specific to music.

Resources and accommodation

You may need to report on the way standards in the courses you inspect are affected by the quality and availability of resources. You will need to consider the range and availability of books, sheet music, scores, instruments and, in particular, listening material and facilities – and how easy it is for students to borrow them for their own private study. You should determine how easily students can gain access to computers during their private study time and if, having started a piece of composing on a computer in a lesson, they are able to spend uninterrupted time completing it.

When judging the quality of accommodation and equipment for music, judge how well the provision allows students to learn and make progress. Consider the following questions.

- Are rooms available for them to practise other than in timetabled lessons?
- Are lessons timetabled in rooms with appropriate space and equipment or are they squashed into small spaces which limit the range of approaches and activities?
- Are there sufficient keyboards for theory work as well as for keyboard players?
- Are the instruments well cared for and maintained in good playing order?
- Is there an effective system for booking out equipment and controlling stock, so that staff and students do not waste time trying to locate equipment for classes?
- Is there sufficient music technology equipment for the demands of the course, and to create at least some resemblance to professional practice (sampling, sequencing, recording on to digital media, mixing and editing, burning CDs)?
- Are students able to work without being disturbed by intrusive noise from other music rooms?
- Is the sound level in studios checked and controlled by staff to ensure that students do not damage their hearing?

Curriculum and management

It is not unusual for AS/A-level music groups to be very small, often with only one or two students. When considering the timetable for music, you will need to judge how this affects the quality of teaching and learning and the standards that students are able to achieve. Are sufficient opportunities provided for students to play in or work with ensembles at a sufficiently advanced level? This might possibly be through directing a school/college extra-curricular group or playing in a band or orchestra. It may be that there are collaborative arrangements with another local school or college and you will need to judge how these help to improve standards. Does the school/college combine AS and A2 groups? If so, does the teaching match the needs of the individual students at the particular stage of the course they have reached? Similarly, are different courses combined and, if so, do lessons cover the appropriate course content in ways which allow students to learn and make progress?

Popular music students need to form bands from within the year group. Is this achieved without marginalising less experienced or proficient students, but so that viable performance groups are formed? Are the inevitable conflicts and changes of band membership managed effectively, so that each student has appropriate opportunities for rehearsing and performing in public?

Courses in popular music and music technology include a wide range of different activities for assessment. Is there sufficient consistency of standards across all assessment areas? Do staff collaborate on moderating standards across all elements of the course, and is there effective internal verification of standards?

Increasingly, students on vocational music courses either have all their tuition on two or three days of the week, or have long periods between lessons. Is this time effectively monitored by staff and put to good use by students? Are there resources for them to use between lessons?

4 Writing the report

The following are two examples of subject sections from inspection reports, the first for a school sixth form and the second covering a broad range of performing arts courses in an FE college. (They do not necessarily reflect the judgements in any or all of the examples given elsewhere in this booklet.) The summative judgements in these reports use, for schools, the seven-point scale: *excellent*; *very good*; *good*; *satisfactory*; *unsatisfactory*; *poor*; *very poor*. For colleges there is the five-point scale: *outstanding*; *good*; *satisfactory*; *unsatisfactory*; *very weak*. The summative judgements *excellent/very good* used in school reports correspond to *outstanding* in colleges; *poor/very poor* used in schools correspond to *very weak* in colleges.

Music

The inspection looked in detail at the A-level music course, but two lessons on the A-level music technology course were also seen. In one the teaching was good and in the other it was very good; a characteristic of both was the range of activities that moved learning along at a good pace. The music technology course had its first set of results last year and the five candidates' results showed good progress from their previous attainment. The students following the music technology course are closely involved with the production work for the termly concerts and the annual stage performance.

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**.

Strengths

- Results in A-level music have been above the national average in recent years.
- The students' achievement is good; they have comprehensive knowledge and understand a good range of music.
- Teaching is good; teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic.
- Students are highly motivated and show commitment both to the course and to other music activities.
- The department is well organised and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Students are not sufficiently encouraged to work independently.

The music department has a good record of examination results, which have been above the national average over the last five years. A particular strength is the comparatively large numbers of students entered for A-level music. There are no significant variations in the standards attained by students from different ethnic groups or of different gender.

The observation of lessons and of other work during the inspection confirmed that standards in music are above average. The school has maintained its level of success noted at the time of the last inspection, and it has helped students to build effectively on the average GCSE results with which they started the course. This represents good achievement by the students. Gifted students, with well above average GCSE results, do not always attain the highest A-level grades; their achievement is satisfactory. Students have good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of music and demonstrate good musicianship when playing and discussing their music. They are able to direct ensemble work, paying attention to expressive qualities and developing different interpretations. They give convincing performances. A notable feature of all the students is the way in which they have used their studies and their cultural traditions to develop a personal style, which is apparent in the creativity and originality of much of their work. All the students, including those not following the music technology course, use ICT effectively in their work. Female and male students do equally well.

Students learn well because the teaching is good. In all the lessons seen, teaching was good and in two it was very good, inspiring the students to produce sophisticated compositions and enabling them to gain deep insights into the music of the area of study. Teachers show good knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject and they expose students to a broad and varied musical repertoire. Strengths of the teaching are its pace, challenge and creativity. In a lesson on antiphony in Year 12, for example, students were helped to understand the concept by performing a piece of Gabrieli brass music with groups in two different rooms. By recording their performance and then appraising it, they

were able to identify important features of devices, phrasing and dynamics. The teacher then asked them to work in pairs, to compare and contrast the Gabrieli with a piece by Monteverdi, and then present their findings to the rest of the group. All this was completed in a one-hour lesson.

All the students are well motivated and enthusiastic about the music they play and study. They organise their own ensemble groups, help with junior choir and make a valuable contribution to the school orchestra. However, they do not engage in a great deal of independent study for the theory aspects of the course, despite the good resources which are made available for them. This, in part, means that the higher-attaining students are not extending their musical knowledge well enough to reach the highest grades.

The department is well organised and managed. The head of department has recently developed a sound approach to target-setting, based on careful analysis of individual students' work. The analysis showed that higher attainers needed greater challenges and teachers are now clear about the specific learning which is required. The head of department has introduced a programme of training for the three teachers who work in the department, and this has resulted in the best practice in teaching being used more consistently across the department.

Performing arts

Overall, the quality of provision is **outstanding**.

Strengths

- Standards are well above average on most of the courses; students produce accomplished, confident practical work and this shows very good achievement in relation to their previous attainment.
- Teaching is very good; teachers make effective use of their professional experience and expertise.
- Many students go on to employment and higher education.
- The accommodation and equipment for music are outstanding.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation for performing arts is poor and this restricts what students and teachers can do.

Scope of provision

There are Intermediate GNVQ and Advanced National Diploma full-time courses in performing arts. Intermediate- and Advanced-level vocational courses in popular music are validated by the Open College Network. Dance, music and music technology are offered at GCE AS and A level and have recruited strongly. There is no discrete provision for part-time day or evening students, although there are a few part-time adult students on the popular music courses.

Standards and achievement

Overall, standards are well above average. There has been further improvement from the good standards at the time of the last inspection. In the Intermediate-level courses in performing arts and popular music, and the Advanced-level course in popular music, the most recent results were well above national averages, both for the proportions of students passing and in terms of the achievement of higher grades. On the Intermediate-level courses, almost all students completed their studies and achieved the qualification. The course for the National Diploma in performing arts was not quite so successful, but even here the retention rate was close to the national figure and standards were above the national average. Results in the AS and A-level courses were also above the national averages. Since many of these students, some of whom are from minority ethnic backgrounds, started their AS and A-level work with relatively modest levels of previous attainment, these results indicate that their achievement was very good.

Intermediate-level students are successful in progressing to Advanced-level courses. Advanced-level music students progress to employment or self-employment, mostly in the music business. A few music and most performing arts Advanced-level students go on to degree-level study. Some past students are now doing well in the profession.

Students on vocational courses venture musical ideas in theory and practice with confidence. Much of the playing and singing is assured and some of it, both at Intermediate and at Advanced level, is at a high standard. Practical work in performing arts classes and rehearsals shows strong characterisation and creative movement ideas. There is some lively and well-presented written work from female students who missed much of their earlier education because of family circumstances, and most students show good levels of literacy. This equips young performers and musicians well for life as independent professionals. Music students show confidence and accomplishment in creating, recording, editing and producing music on computers. In a rehearsal of work they had devised themselves, performing arts students ensured that their acting skills kept pace with the demands of their material; the work showed accomplishment as well as commitment and enthusiasm. Students start these vocational courses with levels of attainment similar to those often found for such courses. Their attainment, therefore, indicates very good achievement.

Standards on AS- and A-level courses are above average; music A-level students are unusually confident in their aural work. They sing well in class and in rehearsal. Dance AS students showed, in analysis of a set work, that they had carefully researched its cultural and historical context. Many music A-level students have gone on to music degree courses or to professional training at conservatoires.

Quality of education

Teaching is very good. Teachers use their wide range of professional experience and expertise to good effect in practical and theoretical lessons. They draw very effectively on the rich cultural experiences of the students. There is a suitable emphasis on core vocational elements such as voice for performing arts students. As a result, students make good progress in developing their basic skills, and this provides a good foundation for their other work. Teaching is sensitive to individual students' needs, yet enthusiastic and demanding. For example, the teacher at a band rehearsal pushed a confident and skilled band hard to achieve more, while leaving a much less confident and well-prepared group of students to work by themselves before playing their arrangement to him. Both bands responded well to the different kinds of encouragement and guidance.

Lessons are well planned. Students are familiar with and confident about the nature of their work. There is a good balance of activities, allowing students freedom of expression but offering them appropriate support. For example, in a music composition lesson, the teacher and the students together considered how musicians seek creative ideas and stimulus, before the students progressed to writing and playing their own material. Students work well at practical tasks in class. They concentrate effectively on their work and co-operate well in small groups, independently of the teachers.

On performing arts courses, the teaching is also at a high standard, despite difficult surroundings. In a lesson using masks, the teacher ensured that students experienced the powerful effect of wearing masks, as well as helping them to understand more about the development of the commedia dell'arte. The lesson provided a very effective mix of practical experience and theatre history.

On the GCE AS and A-level courses, teachers have high expectations of what their students are able to achieve and respond effectively to the varying levels of skill and confidence to be found within a class. In a music technology lesson, the teacher moved around students working at computers and ensured that the higher-attaining students were challenged to develop their ideas further, while weaker students received the support they needed to make good progress. As a result, the students showed considerable interest and enthusiasm.

Students receive careful tutorial guidance, and their progress is effectively monitored. Some students receive literacy support, but none of the students identified as in need of numeracy support took up the offer of extra help.

The college has invested heavily at the main site. A suite of new studios provides a pleasant, orderly environment for music-making, and equipment is at a professional standard. Sound levels are generally not excessive or disruptive. Performing arts students are housed in an old primary school, which provides a poor-quality learning environment. There are insufficient teaching rooms and studios for the number of students and courses needing them; access is difficult for disabled students. It is to the great credit of the teachers and students that they achieve so well in such uninspiring conditions. However, the accommodation does restrict the activities that can be undertaken and this results in some frustration in National Diploma students.

Leadership and management

Leadership is very good. The courses are well managed, with students' progress being effectively monitored and careful attention being paid to any ways in which the teaching could be improved yet further. Support for students who missed earlier schooling through their difficult behaviour or family circumstances is managed very effectively. Staff have regular team meetings. There is a well-developed self-assessment procedure and the action plan has precise strategies for improvement. There is a high number of part-time staff involved in these courses, and careful thought has been given to developing effective ways in which these teachers can cross-moderate each others' work, participate in the development of the courses and meet on a regular basis. A distinctive feature of the performing arts provision is the way staff work across subject and course boundaries to enrich the students' experience. Music students recently played for a dance students' performance, music technology students regularly record and edit music students' work, and all students collaborated on an ambitious but highly successful production of *West Side Story*. This was simply but effectively staged at a local studio theatre. The performing arts provision has a high profile in the locality.

Designed and produced by Matrix Print Consultants Ltd, Rothwell, Northants 01536 713811