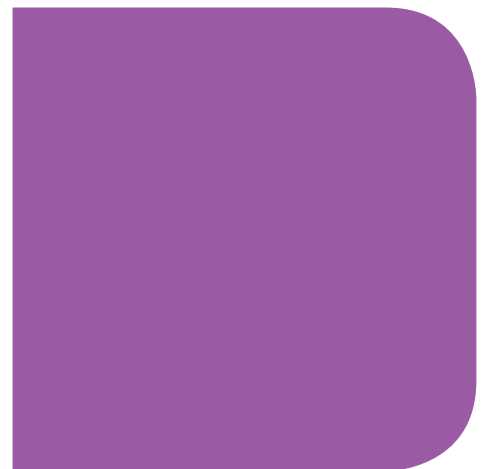


# Making more of music: Improving the quality of music teaching in secondary schools





Ofsted's report, published in February 2009, *Making more of music: an evaluation of music in schools 2005–08*, provided detailed evidence and analysis from inspections of music teaching.<sup>1</sup> Where the provision for music was good, all benefited: students enjoyed music, and music contributed much to the school and community. However, while some provision was outstanding, students did not make as much musical progress as they could, especially during Key Stage 3. This booklet aims to help teachers to provide the best possible opportunities for all students.

The best teaching seen engaged all students through well-chosen, progressive and accumulative tasks that helped them to enjoy musical experiences of high quality and to deepen their musical understanding. This booklet includes examples of effective practice, as well as descriptions of some of the less effective lessons inspectors saw. It draws on work from the academic year 2008/09, as well as from the report itself.

The main weaknesses all related strongly to the quality of teaching. They included:

- a lack of emphasis on increasing the quality and depth of students' musical responses
- inconsistency of musical experiences within and across key stages
- ineffective assessment.

For students of all abilities, teaching and learning in music in secondary schools must shift away from a narrow emphasis on technical competence towards musical understanding. Not all the schools visited understood the difference between progress in separate components of music and musical progress, when all aspects come together, that is, integrated practice. The fundamental challenge for teachers is how better to develop students' musical understanding.

While increasing quality of teaching lies at the heart of improving music provision, it is important to recognise that each lesson must be developed as a part of the whole provision, in the light of the students' particular needs and the school's ambitions. Senior leadership teams and heads of music departments are invited to discuss the following four questions. The answers could have a significant impact on the way teaching in their school is developed.

1. Why is music important for all our students, our school and our community?
2. What are the most important outcomes we want to achieve in relation to musical progress, involving students in additional musical experiences, and the broader contribution of music to students' personal development?
3. What are our measures of success – what are our targets?
4. How will we know we have been successful – for all our students, by gender, ability and background?

## What are the essential aspects of effective music teaching?

This publication highlights eight aspects of effective teaching. These are traced through the chart on pages 6 and 7, which describes the satisfactory, good and outstanding features seen in music inspections. The challenge is to develop teaching so that all satisfactory features become good and all good features outstanding.

An inspector's overall judgement on a lesson is based on the balance of all features and, most importantly, on the impact they have on pupils' musical progress. Outstanding teaching will generally show nearly all the outstanding features and, as a result, pupils make rapid progress. Other lessons generally have a mix of these features – both in number and quality. The examples which follow the chart show how these aspects were seen in a variety of music lessons with different balances of weaker and stronger features. The later examples had more outstanding features than the earlier ones and, as a result, students in these lessons made better progress.

The relatively high proportion of schools in the survey where music is not yet good shows that there is much to be done. However, most schools had at least some positive features on which to build.

If your school is outstanding, this text celebrates the work of schools like yours. You will be aware that it is one thing to achieve excellence and another to sustain it. Perhaps there are ideas here that will help.

<sup>1</sup> [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080235](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080235)





## How to use this leaflet

This leaflet is intended as a discussion document for music departments in all secondary schools. It should also be discussed with members of the senior management team so that they can provide additional support where necessary.

The chart on pages 6 and 7, is not meant to be used as a tick list. It is the extent to which all aspects come together and enable the quality of musical response that is important – not whether each aspect is being covered.

Use the leaflet and the chart to analyse what is working well and what could be developed further. The challenge is to look closely at the extent to which teaching engages all students and enables them to make rapid musical progress.

1. Read and compare the examples of lessons to understand the features which have been identified.
2. Consider which examples match most closely what is done in your school and discuss which aspects are seen most often and which are not being used yet.
3. Observe lessons and write some new examples.<sup>2</sup> Then annotate them as in this leaflet.
4. Discuss the examples and identify specific features to explore and develop as a department.
5. Increasingly, involve students in evaluating lessons – ask them what they feel they have learned, what they can now do better, how the lesson helped them learn and how the lesson could have been even better.



# Moving to outstanding teaching

	Satisfactory	Good	Outstanding
1. Be clear and simple – define a clear musical focus for the work and make sure students know how to improve their work	Learning focus provides broad focus for work but progression tends to be about increasing musical technique, for example, play a more difficult melody.	Clearly defined learning focus and differentiated outcomes include some references to increasing the quality of the response. Students are clear about expectations and know what they need to do to improve their work.	There is a clear emphasis on increasing the musical quality and depth of musical response, not just difficulty of task. Students understand that the musical quality of their response is more important than how many notes are used/played.
2. Start and finish with sound – always put the emphasis on aural development	Students listen to their work and the work of others but learning does not always start from sound, for example, notation is used too early in the learning process.	Aural skills are developed throughout the lesson – music is played as students enter and students are constantly encouraged to listen first so that, for example, notations are used as a support, not as a barrier; work is constantly modelled.	There is no doubt this is a music lesson – all learning grows out of what is heard; audio recording is used constantly for students to celebrate and improve their work.
3. Give students opportunities to show and develop their learning in different ways	Practical work is at the heart of the lesson but the emphasis tends to be on spoken or written responses.	Students are encouraged to show what they understand as well as through speaking; ICT is used well as a way of helping all students create and experience high-quality music making.	A thorough knowledge of the students' individual strengths enables the teacher to ensure all are able to show and extend their musical understanding in the most appropriate ways.
4. Link all activities – develop effective integrated practice	Tasks all relate to the broad focus but opportunities are missed to make direct links between experiences.	The learning focus is used to build links between different tasks and reinforce and consolidate students' learning; students are helped to make connections between their own work and the work of others.	All tasks are used progressively and accumulatively to increase the quality and depth of students' responses; there is constant drawing of connections between students' work and the work of others, including established composers.

	Satisfactory	Good	Outstanding
5. Make it real – enable students to experience what it feels like to be a professional musician	Tasks enable students to learn but are not directly related to how music would be developed in the real world and so opportunities are missed to engage students fully.	Tasks engage students by being related to activities and processes used in the music profession and some broader aspects are explored, such as the intended effect on the audience chosen.	Tasks are chosen and developed so that students enjoy the same challenges and opportunities that face professional musicians – which are constantly made explicit by the teacher.
6. Listen critically to their musical responses and maintain high musical expectations	Attention is given to how well they respond and weakness identified; work is improved but there can be some overgenerous praise.	Students are challenged to improve the musical quality of their work and close analysis of why some are finding it difficult leads to exploring different approaches.	All students see themselves as musicians as a result of the high expectations for all and the constant emphasis on improving the quality of their individual musical responses as part of the whole experience.
7. Increase depth of musical understanding – ask ‘why’, not just ‘what’ and ‘how’	Students’ learning is extended through exploring different features and how they contribute to the overall effect.	Students enjoy exploring different kinds of music and are helped to understand how and why they are similar or different.	Students are fully engaged through considering complex issues about music – its role in society and how it reflects and influences how people think and behave; and they apply this understanding in their own work.
8. Collect and use appropriate data to adapt work and increase expectations	Assessment is an informal part of the lesson, enabling the teacher to adapt work; work is marked and records kept.	Assessment is an ongoing part of the lesson so that work is matched more closely to students’ learning needs; work is assessed regularly and students are clear what they need to do to improve their work further; assessments are matched appropriately to National Curriculum levels.	Assessment is an integral part of the lesson through the way students are encouraged to assess themselves against the agreed success criteria; tasks are changed and expectations raised in direct response to the progress made; simple records of attainment are kept and matched to broad targets by students and teachers.



**Example 1:** The lack of a musical focus in this lesson meant that the tasks were unrelated and, while the students learned to play some individual lines, they made

limited musical progress overall. This example also highlights the use of inappropriate ‘listening’ tests.

Description of lesson	Inspector’s commentary
<p>In a Year 10 lesson, students were learning to perform individual lines from Pachelbel’s Canon.</p> <p>The lesson began with a 10-minute presentation from the teacher about key words and terms and a short extract of Pachelbel’s Canon was played once. The extract stopped halfway through the second playing of the ground bass.</p> <p>Students were asked if they could hear the ground bass. After getting responses of ‘yes’ or ‘no’ the teacher then asked them to continue with the performance of given lines without any reference to why they were performing these fragments or what features they had in common.</p> <p>The class worked conscientiously on the task and learned to play the lines they had been given.</p> <p>The lesson ended with a ‘listening’ test. Students were told, ‘There are six marks up for grabs’. After the test the teacher went through the questions, one by one, giving the expected answer. Students’ responses were very superficial. One boy challenged the given answer on the speed of the music by saying, ‘But the first violin part is much quicker, Miss’. This was dismissed by, ‘We’re concentrating on the main part of the music’. Another student, in response to the expected answer of ‘major’, said, ‘But I could hear minor chords’, to which the teacher responded, ‘Well, there are a few minor chords in it, so I can see how you are confused, but it <b>is</b> in a major key’ – and that was it.</p>	<p>The task was clear but it had no musical focus other than the playing of isolated lines of music.</p> <p>The key terms did not arise out of what was heard and so students were expected to make their own connections. The single hearing of the excerpt gave insufficient time to develop students’ listening skills. The unmusical stopping of the excerpt halfway through the ground bass prevented this being a musical experience.</p> <p>Answers of ‘yes’ or ‘no’ gave the teacher little information about the extent to which individuals really understood – and nothing was done to develop better responses. Most of the group had instrumental lessons and managed to learn the notes given. They also worked hard to play these as well as they could. However, opportunities were missed to improve the quality of performances through linking the phrases to what had been heard and through performing them together as a class.</p> <p>The ‘listening’ test was unrelated to the rest of the lesson and did nothing to extend students’ skills or understanding. All questions related to narrow, isolated examples and encouraged superficial answers. Very able and confident students felt short-changed by the expected answers to the test and were not content with being told their answers were right or wrong – especially when they did not agree with the teacher’s answer. The response from the teacher did nothing to help the class understand the interesting relationship between different rhythmic components and how these can be seen to fit within an overall pulse. She also missed the opportunity to explore the meaning of tonality and how this is expressed in some kinds of music as being overall major or minor.</p>



**Example 2:** Students in this lesson used the opportunity to create their own sound compositions but their musical progress was limited by insufficient exploration of the

musical genre being used and by being set a task that had no relation to what real musicians do and why they do it.

Description of lesson	Inspector's commentary
<p>The Year 7 class was set the task of composing 'impressionistic music'.</p> <p>The class was put into groups of four or five – selected by the teacher so that each group had at least one student who could lead the work.</p> <p>Each group was given a picture painted by a French Impressionist and told to use this as a stimulus for their composition. Each group had also been allocated a range of classroom instruments. Most of the class started making sounds on the instruments but these sounds were not always related to the picture. The leader of each group did well to get the rest of the group to agree the best sounds. Eventually most groups agreed sounds and started to put these together to reflect some aspects of the painting. In most cases these represented sound effects and matched objects in the painting. Two groups developed these sounds into a rhythmic piece. Two other groups created a piece that reflected more abstract aspects.</p> <p>The teacher visited each group, checking the students were on task and asking each group how their sounds matched the painting.</p> <p>At the end of the lesson each group performed and the class was asked to comment on what was good and what could have been improved.</p> <p>The musical progress made in this lesson was very slow and the standard of work was significantly below what should be expected.</p>	<p>The learning objective described only the activity and not what the class was to learn.</p> <p>In each group a student was selected to lead the work but nothing was said about the roles of others. Hence many students sat back and let others work or just explored sounds on their chosen instrument.</p> <p>By starting with the painting rather than the music, the work focused too quickly on isolated visual aspects, which led to low-level sound effects. The class needed to hear a range of impressionistic music and relate these to the Impressionist paintings as a whole so they could begin to identify some of the distinctive characteristics of impressionistic music.</p> <p>Two groups made the best of the task and wanted to look beyond the obvious but did not have the tools or information needed to be able to make use of their creativity. They eagerly responded to questions from the inspector about why the pictures might be called 'Impressionist' and why the painters might have wanted to paint in this way. Their responses showed significant unrealised potential.</p> <p>The comments and questions by the teacher gave some helpful advice about structuring the ideas but tended to reinforce the use of sound effects.</p> <p>The students' comments were superficial, referring only to how well they performed together or how the sound effects matched parts of the painting. Nothing was said which related to impressionism in music or in painting. While the teacher told the inspector that the class had heard and discussed impressionistic music in previous lessons, there was no evidence of this in the way the class responded to the task or in the teacher's comments during the lesson.</p>

**Example 3:** The students in this class knew what they had to do but the progress made was only satisfactory because they did not know how to improve the quality of

their performance or what might make their response more musical.

Description of lesson	Inspector's commentary
<p>A Year 7 class was set a performance task. The work was planned carefully so that it was matched to students' different abilities and all of them understood what to do.</p> <p>The class was given three tasks of increasing difficulty. All the students were expected to be able to play sections of a given melody by the end of the lesson: some would play the whole melody and a few would play the melody with an accompaniment.</p> <p>Most students attempted the simplest task but some found the notation difficult to understand and use. They also tended to try to play the whole section, making the same mistakes each time and without any sense of how to improve their performance. The students who undertook the most difficult task were those who had instrumental lessons and they managed to complete the task quickly.</p> <p>The teacher helped students during the session and enabled them to make satisfactory progress overall. At the end of the lesson they were given just one opportunity to present their work.</p> <p>The students' levels of engagement with the task varied, as did the amount of progress that each one was able to make.</p>	<p>The lesson plan was clear and fitted appropriately into the overall scheme of work. The class had been prepared well so they knew what was expected – in terms of the task.</p> <p>The teacher had considered different learning needs but not enough emphasis was given to the quality of response expected. The lesson included only performance tasks and the many opportunities to increase learning through integrated work with listening and/or composing were missed.</p> <p>Students needed to have heard the melodies and to have copied them aurally first so the notation could then be used as a support – not as a barrier for those who find notation more difficult. They also needed more guidance on how to practise and on the use of keyboard techniques.</p> <p>More emphasis on quality would have given the experienced students a more appropriate musical challenge.</p> <p>There was some good input from the teacher but the comments made were often repeated for every student. Had the students worked together more as a class, the teaching might have been much more efficient. More than one performance would also have given more opportunity for the students to show and develop the skills they needed to perform well.</p> <p>Students' motivation and enjoyment of the task would have been much greater if the learning of parts had led to a whole-class performance. Students would then have been trying to improve their own part so that the overall piece sounded better. Aiming for a performance by the whole class would also have turned the task into a real musical experience.</p>



**Example 4:** The clear musical focus, based on the development of listening skills and excellent use of audio recordings, enabled the students to make good progress

overall in this lesson. This example also shows how comparing examples is more effective than exploring excerpts in isolation.

Description of lesson	Inspector's commentary
<p>The Year 9 class had been doing work based on 'Musical Futures' for two terms.<sup>3</sup> This included students creating their own performances based on audio recordings.</p> <p>This lesson was planned to provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their own work by comparing what they were doing with 'real' examples.</p> <p>The lesson began with the class watching a DVD of a pop group performing in a recording studio. They were asked to identify 10 features of the performance that made it good.</p> <p>Unusually, every pupil was able to find at least three features very quickly and many students identified 10. These ranged from 'they were playing their parts confidently' to 'they were making a good fusion between two different musical styles'.</p> <p>They listened to their own performances and identified not only the strong features but also what could have been better. Work was recorded as a natural part of lessons. They were used to hearing their work so they could see what they had improved and what needed further work.</p> <p>The level of engagement and quality of response were much better than those normally seen: the class showed a high level of ability to discriminate features aurally.</p> <p>The students told the inspector that they felt they all listened to music differently now since they had to work it out for themselves.</p>	<p>This approach has developed students' aural skills as they created group performances by distinguishing and copying different parts heard on an audio recording.</p> <p>There is a clear musical focus on improving the quality of students' own work through direct comparison.</p> <p>The emphasis on listening and watching is based on real-life musical challenges where young musicians learn from each other by listening and watching.</p> <p>There was clear evidence of the impact of earlier work on developing students' evaluation skills. However, there was a missed opportunity to highlight the most perceptive comments and deepen students' understanding, especially about the aspects where they may have held different views.</p> <p>The direct link to students' own work enabled them to apply learning across different activities. The effective use of audio recording enabled them to hear and reflect on what they had achieved and identify what they needed to do to improve it further. Students enjoyed the work as they saw how it linked directly to what they were doing in their own groups.</p> <p>While overall responses were better than those seen generally, there were some missed opportunities to extend the responses of the most able and support and increase the understanding of those who were less vocal.</p> <p>Students' comments gave clear evidence of the impact of the work on their wider musical interests.</p>

<sup>3</sup> The Musical Futures Project, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, explores different approaches to music provision at Key Stage 3: [www.musicalfutures.org.uk](http://www.musicalfutures.org.uk). Ofsted evaluated it in 2006: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2682](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2682).



**Example 5:** The quality of teaching and learning in extra-curricular activities is higher than in class lessons. One reason for this is that teachers have much higher

expectations for selected groups. The following example shows how applying the same high expectations can have an impact on learning for all students.

Description of lesson	Inspector's commentary
<p>The Year 7 students arrived promptly and with obvious anticipation. The teacher had prepared a variety of pieces for performance by the whole class, using a wide range of instruments.</p> <p>As each student entered the classroom, the teacher skilfully directed individuals to different instruments, for example suggesting to one girl that she might like to play the bass guitar for this piece. The lesson started in the same way as an orchestral rehearsal – each student checking that their stand, music and instrument were ready. Some started to practise the more difficult sections of their own part as others were getting ready and the teacher set up his keyboard.</p> <p>The teacher supported the performance through playing a keyboard part, giving visual cues where needed. The lesson sped by, with comments used only to highlight parts that were not quite right or to give praise to particularly well-played sections.</p> <p>Each time a weakness was identified, time was given for the students to practise the section, generally with the support of the backing keyboard part played by the teacher.</p> <p>During the lesson, all the students made progress that was at least good, as a result of the constant emphasis on the quality of the performance. There was also a tangible sense of achievement after the final performance.</p>	<p>The prompt arrival was a strong indicator of students' engagement in the work. They knew what to expect and what was expected.</p> <p>The teacher knew individuals' abilities and needs and skilfully ensured each student was given what he or she needed to make progress. This was based on how each student had responded during previous sessions.</p> <p>The teacher's high expectations were exactly the same as those shown in the after-school rehearsal of the senior orchestra. The self-practising was another indicator of the high degree of involvement and an excellent example of students being expected to respond as they would in the real world of music.</p> <p>The excellent balance of visual, aural and verbal cues/ support enabled all students to learn, although some could have benefited from being given the opportunity to lead the performance.</p> <p>The response had to be very good to be praised and the class respected this. Students saw weaknesses as something they could improve. The emphasis on learning through and while they were playing used the time effectively. However, opportunities were missed to record the performances so that students could hear what they had achieved. The music could also have been related to other similar recordings so the class could develop deeper understanding of that style/genre.</p> <p>All students saw themselves as musicians and contributed equally to the quality of the overall performance. They all recognised the equal importance of the other parts.</p>

**Example 6:** The focus of this lesson was clear and simple. There was constant emphasis on increasing students’ musical understanding. While different

melodies were given, the learning focus was not on attempting the most difficult one but on playing the chosen one more musically.

Description of lesson	Inspector’s commentary
<p>In a Year 8 lesson on musical structure focusing on phrase, the teacher played music to the class and identified phrases by playing them on a piano. The class was then asked why music needed phrases. Students suggested that they were needed for music to ‘make sense’ and to ‘sound right’.</p> <p>The class copied phrases demonstrated by the teacher and related these to notated examples.</p> <p>Clear emphasis was given to increasing the quality of performance and this was supported through assessment criteria that highlighted the use of dynamics and tempo.</p> <p>Students then practised the phrases individually and in pairs. Throughout the lesson, they were asked to show how they were progressing. Each time they were asked to perform, they played their phrases several times and the class commented on which one they thought was best and why</p> <p>The discussion showed increasing depth of understanding about musical phrasing. The teacher constantly challenged them to improve their performances even further.</p> <p>The differences between the performances by each pupil and throughout the whole lesson resulted in impressive musical progress. Students were clearly developing understanding of the subtle adjustments needed to play music musically.</p>	<p>Students’ aural skills were engaged and developed from the very beginning of the lesson. The discussion then deepened their musical understanding through asking ‘why’ and giving time for students to offer very different views. First responses were challenged and students helped to develop their thoughts further, such as what they meant by ‘sound right’.</p> <p>Aural skills continued to be developed through learning from demonstration – notation being used only as a support. Students used assessment criteria effectively to check how well they were using musical devices to improve the quality of their performance.</p> <p>A good balance of individual/pair work/whole-class discussion used time efficiently. Students were given plenty of opportunity to show their understanding in different ways – by playing and by commenting. This enabled those with less developed verbal skills still to demonstrate their musical understanding of phrase. Letting students play their phrases several times helped them to show what they could do and provided a rich range of aural examples for the rest of the class to compare.</p> <p>Constant challenge from the teacher played a key part in the progress being made and rubbed off on the way students responded individually and to each other. However, while all students were making progress that was at least good, some would have benefited from some more guidance on finger technique on the keyboards.</p> <p>Students rose to the musical challenge and developed a high level of aural perception which increased their musical understanding. Listening work was integrated effectively with performance work, enabling greater progress than if they had been developed separately.</p>

**Example 7:** The depth of discussion and use of audio examples, including those created by the teacher, enabled these students to make rapid progress in their musical understanding and prepared them excellently for

the following task. This example also highlights the effective use of ICT to enable students to produce work of a very high standard.

Description of lesson	Inspector's commentary
<p>The focus for this first part of a Year 8 lesson was on preparing students for a composition task that would develop and demonstrate their understanding of dance music – particularly how and why it is created.</p> <p>The teacher began by playing two pieces of dance mix music after first asking the students to see if the second piece had ‘borrowed’ anything from the first. The discussion started with identifying the more obvious features of melody and pulse and then aspects of structure. The class was asked if it was ‘OK to copy other people’s ideas in music’. The students became very animated as they went beyond simple answers of ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and started to consider what might be acceptable or not. The teacher’s skill in leading the discussion introduced the notion of copyright; the class was told about the law on copyright.</p> <p>The teacher then played her own dance mix and the class briefly discussed what features would be good if it were played at their end-of-year disco – what would the audience expect? They also suggested ways it could be even better.</p> <p>Students were set the task of composing their own dance mix for sale at the end-of-year disco. Discussion included considering what would make their mix the best, as well as cleverly linking in aspects of copyright and the extent to which they could copy other people’s ideas, including those given by the teacher.</p>	<p>The focus on how and why dance music is created provided a wealth of opportunity for all students to deepen their musical understanding. By starting with the music, the class was immediately engaged in the lesson. The music was familiar but they were challenged to compare two pieces of music aurally.</p> <p>Skilful questioning involved a wide range of students and also challenged their answers, so that the obvious was quickly seen as not being enough. This probing ‘raised the bar’ so that students increasingly provided well-reasoned answers. All were involved, even if it was through clearly showing their support for or disagreement with what was being said. The teacher watched students closely to see how they were responding and the extent to which they were engaged.</p> <p>The class was fully aware of copyright issues but not as clear about what was acceptable. This was an important discussion and related directly to the students’ own real world of music.</p> <p>The inclusion of the teacher’s own composition made it clear that she felt the task worth doing and also that she was open to, and could benefit from, the comments of the class. The question about what the audience would expect provided the stimulus for thinking about why the music is created. The discussion also constantly linked the ‘why’ to specific features in the music so that students could use these when composing their own mix.</p> <p>This was an excellent example of students developing their understanding of musical processes – how dance music is created – and conventions – the features that make one style different from another. All tasks were directly linked to the focus of the lesson and led to students composing, using ICT to produce a high-quality product completely suitable for selling at their disco.</p>

**Example 8:** Students made excellent musical progress in this lesson as a result of the constant emphasis on

increasing the depth and quality of their responses and skilful use of progressive and accumulative tasks.

Description of lesson	Inspector's commentary
<p>Year 9 students were learning about reggae – what it is and why and how it evolved. The previous week they had listened to many different examples and started to identify the distinctive features by copying parts played by the teacher and singing together.</p> <p>Reggae music was playing as they entered. They were quickly set the challenge of playing air guitar to a backing track which used reggae off-beat rhythmic patterns. Students responded immediately with obvious enjoyment. The teacher watched students carefully as they responded, mentally noting those who did this well and those who found it more difficult. Students who were doing it particularly well were identified and the class watched them and tried to improve their own responses. The class discussed what it felt like to play the rhythm and what role the guitar player had in a reggae group.</p> <p>They listened to other examples to see if the points they had made fitted these as well. The teacher skilfully kept relating the points to the ‘where’, ‘when’ and ‘why’ reggae had evolved, referring frequently to a student who had been to Jamaica. The ‘laid-back’ feel of the music was a central thread of all the discussion and practical work. This was cleverly used to improve the quality of a class performance of the reggae piece played at the end of the lesson (the same piece heard at the start).</p> <p>The teacher matched students to different instrument parts, using her knowledge of them, reinforced through observing the air guitar task. She also kept demonstrating how the ‘feel’ could be achieved by performing with the class and keeping up constant pressure to achieve the highest musical quality. The final performance was outstanding, with all students showing clear understanding of the ‘feel’ of reggae. The bell went and nobody wanted to leave.</p>	<p>The exploration of ‘why’ and ‘how’ enabled students to deepen their musical understanding.</p> <p>There was no doubt this was a music lesson – music was used to engage and excite students’ learning from the very start. High expectations and using students to demonstrate maintained the pace and energy throughout.</p> <p>The teacher used every opportunity to confirm and extend students’ knowledge of how well they were responding in music. Constant references to musical processes, such as the role of the guitar player, enabled them to deepen their musical understanding.</p> <p>Frequent aural comparison reinforced learning and increased aural perception and memory. Information about the context of the music was used skilfully to deepen understanding so students could perform better – all points were directly related to what was heard; it was not just about giving the historical and geographical background.</p> <p>This was an excellent example of how all activities can be linked through the use of a clear musical focus. All the activities were progressive and accumulative. The aim and outcome were about shared, quality musical experience and not about who could play the most difficult part.</p> <p>This lesson clearly developed students’ understanding of music as a powerful personal, social and cultural experience.</p>

*This leaflet has been written for music teachers and senior managers in secondary schools. A similar leaflet is available for all staff in primary schools: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090084](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090084).*





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