

Head of Guernsey Schools' Music Service Mervyn Grand offers his take on Ofsted's Music in schools: what hubs must do

It has been interesting to read the Ofsted report *Music in schools: what hubs must do* and the response from Nigel Taylor, Chair of Music Mark collating responses from members. Having worked for a large and successful Music Service in England, I have a continuing professional interest in developments, not least because they can often affect Guernsey sooner or later. Whilst the collective response is very comprehensive I hope to be able to add a slightly different, offshore perspective.

English Music Services have had to adapt and change very significantly since the introduction of Local Management of Schools and with the advent of hubs. Prior to receiving funding direct from central government, it was of course government policy to delegate LEA funds for Music Services to schools as a means to empower them. Now we read "*As the customers were frequently not expert enough to know what constitutes high-quality music teaching, or demand what was needed, improvement was unlikely to thrive.*"

Against a background of increased Headteacher autonomy, the National Plan unusually recognises the benefits of cooperative working, something which as musicians we all very much value. Schools and pupils are still customers to a large extent so clearly the relationship with Services is a complicated one in which hubs are now expected to ask supportive but challenging questions. Services and individual schools are clearly at various stages in getting to grips with the enhanced role of hubs in a very challenging environment with financial circumstances and workforce reform.

The Ofsted report is called *Music in schools: what hubs must do* and the clue is in the title. Hubs should take some comfort from the fact that it does not attempt to report on the work of hubs as a whole. It is unfortunate that it has generated the headlines it has and that it does not focus on what schools should do to the same extent. The National Plan identified four core roles for music education hubs: first access, ensemble opportunities, progression routes and a singing strategy. One of its extension roles was to offer CPD to school staff in supporting schools to deliver music in the curriculum. Instrumental teaching, orchestras, ensembles, choirs, festivals and holiday music courses barely get a mention as these reach "only a minority of pupils," however these are core activities for hubs.

Nevertheless, meeting the needs for all children is clearly a cornerstone of the National Plan so it is instructive to look for clues in the report for where hubs are most successful. Size matters it would seem: "Many of the smaller hubs did well and were working with almost all the eligible schools. Larger hubs, in county areas, tended to find this more difficult, often reaching only about two thirds of eligible schools. In one hub, only about a quarter of eligible schools were involved."

Elsewhere the report praises a large county hub for developing its area structure, "not just as a system for providing music centre and ensemble opportunities, but to engage proactively with school leaders about their own internal provision." If hubs are to function effectively, and for everyone to feel part of a musical community, they must not be too large and it will take time for relationships to develop. This needs to be borne in mind in terms of future funding and resourcing.

The Arts Council is challenged in the report to take rapid action to improve the reporting and accountability framework for music hubs. Whilst there clearly needs to be accountability for these funds it is difficult to see how a national body can take responsibility to determine how effectively funds are used at a local level.

Finally, it is not difficult to detect a change in direction towards more notation and more classical music in the music curriculum in the Ofsted report and Music Mark's response correctly identifies the growing skills gap that schools are likely to experience if the curriculum develops in this direction.

From my perspective and despite the challenges they clearly face, hubs, adequately funded with Music Services at their heart, seem best placed to help schools to tackle the "enduring problem" with music in schools and to provide musical opportunities beyond the school gates.

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These are personal views and do not represent those of the Guernsey Education Department