



SWINDON MUSIC COOPERATIVE

SELF EVALUATION AND PEER MODERATION OF MUSIC SERVICES

In 2008 the Federation of Music Services (FMS) began a three year programme of peer moderation for local authority music services in partnership with the Department for Children, Schools and Families. The purpose was to carry out on a national and voluntary basis, a process of joint evaluation of the internal review procedures of each music service.

The work of music services remains non-statutory, with recurrent government funding being the main, though not always the largest, source of income for most services. The FMS has incorporated the aims of recent national policies in education, as well as in music education, since the provision takes place in curriculum as well as extended curriculum time. The organisation is now leading the work on reaching consistency in the range of provision; of increasing participation of young people during their schooling; of working closely with all other external music organisations; of demonstrating more widely and more publicly the qualities within and across music services; and of responding to the challenges of the second Music Manifesto and the government's recent 'Aspirations for music education within local authorities' document.

Colleagues involved in the moderated review are the host music service and two evaluation partners accredited by FMS, with distinctive roles, but working on equal terms. From January 2009 the FMS is reducing the provision to one evaluation partner, to ensure that two new series of visits can be planned; as well as maintaining the three year cycle of contact. All evaluation partners are themselves senior staff of music services. For more than two years, the FMS has devised and refined documents and guidance to support music services in self evaluation procedures. At the same time conferences have been held, so that evaluation partners could agree their role and tasks. A series of pilot moderations took place during the summer 2008 and since then there have been partnership visits to 28 local authorities.

This document is an evaluation summary of the moderation of the internal review which took place in the autumn term 2009. The text and judgements were reached and agreed jointly between the music service and the evaluation partners, after they had worked together for 4 days. The summary is an internal, unpublished document, shared between the host music service, local authority and the DCSF. The intention is for it to inform local development planning and contribute to national benchmarks. We very much hope that all parties find it useful as a tool in raising levels of achievement and participation, in and through music.

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EVALUATION SUMMARY *for* SWINDON MUSIC COOPERATIVE

This evaluation summary was prepared by Helen Mason following visits in October and November 2009. The evaluation was carried out and agreed with Swindon Music Cooperative (SMC). Evidence was collected through:

- Observations of 9 individual instrumental and vocal lessons alongside three of the members of SMC responsible for lesson observations;
- Interviews and discussions with the leadership team, the business manager, a school head of department and the head of Swindon Music Cooperative;
- Scrutiny of documentation including Membership Handbook, development plans, extensive policy documents, school and teacher questionnaires and other data.

The scope of this evaluation is limited to the provision and management of instrumental and vocal lessons in Swindon schools provided by members of SMC. A music service is provided by the Local Authority (LA) and is subject to a separate Music Service Evaluation Partner (MSEP) moderation.

1. *Context and Characteristics*

Swindon Music Cooperative was founded in 1998 following the formation of Swindon Borough Council as a unitary authority. The population of Swindon is 180,061 people and there are 75,154 occupied houses in the authority. The population of Swindon is predicted to grow by 38% over the next two decades. Currently 95.2% of the population is white British. SMC is a membership body, which provides services to self-employed teachers in return for a fee. Until recently a grant of £37,500 was received from Swindon Borough Council to support administrative charges and remissions. This is no longer available to SMC although a small and reducing remissions grant is available this year.

The SMC vision is “to be an outstanding public service in music and education.”

In serving this mission, SMC aims to develop every pupil’s musical potential according to their individual needs and aspirations; and raise the quality, breadth and provision of music in schools through:

- High quality instrumental and vocal tuition;
- In-service training and professional development;
- Effective leadership, partnerships, management and administration.

2. *Views of learners and stakeholders*

SMC provided extensive evidence from pupil and parent questionnaires, consultation with teacher members and records of meetings with schools. There was a good response to the parents’ questionnaire which indicated that 84% of the parents rated the quality of the service to be good or better and 37% considered it to be excellent overall. Helpful comments were collected from over 300 pupils about what they enjoyed about their lessons and what they would like to do more of.

Views of schools are collected through visits. Records of these meetings indicate that schools value the teaching and have made suggestions of other services the SMC could provide like large group teaching, ensembles and help with “Musical Futures” style classroom models. Consultation with teacher members shows a high level of satisfaction with the services provided, with INSET and admin support particularly valued.

SMC has good systems in place to collect the views of stakeholders, which show a high level of satisfaction with the provision. Individual issues are acted on and adjustments made to provision promptly. An area for development is for the service to analyse the data to inform policy change and develop new areas of work.

This area of work was agreed to be good.

3. Achievement and Standards

Records of lesson observations and examination results of individual teachers show that pupils make good progress in instrumental lessons. In lessons jointly observed by the MSEP pupils were encouraged to improve sound production by an appropriate balance of notation and non-notation learning. The standard of improvisation in lessons was particularly high. Technical issues were dealt with as the music demanded and this encouraged pupils to work on, for example, exercises to improve instrumental skills. Where achievement was agreed to be outstanding, teachers set clear objectives at the beginning of each lesson and creative activities were devised so that pupils could achieve these.

In the majority of lessons observed, plans included medium and long term goals and strategies for achievement over time. There was some evidence of teachers relating materials used in instrumental lessons with school schemes of work, which should have a positive effect on achievements in curriculum music.

Ensemble skills are an integral part of lessons and pupils are encouraged to join a range of ensembles. In the minority of lessons where standards were only satisfactory, teachers led the lessons without pupils being engaged in their own learning. All of the lessons observed were individual although, overall, 22% of pupils are taught in groups. SMC could consider if some pupils would make better progress in small groups or pairs.

All the evidence available suggests that achievement and standards are high. An area for development is for the service to analyse the achievements of groups of pupils to check that this is consistent, for example pupils in a particular key stage or by gender.

Achievements and Standards were agreed to be good.

4. Support for Pupils

SMC provide lessons in 77% of primary/junior schools and 100% of secondary schools. From school visits it is clear that schools value the contribution of SMC. However the responsibility for school and community support rests mainly with the LA so no judgement is made in this section.

5. *Personal Development*

Pupils clearly enjoy their instrumental lessons and good relationships between pupils and teachers were observed. Responses to the pupil and parent questionnaire support this view. An area for development is for pupils to take more responsibility for their own musical development and be supported in assessing their own learning.

The service has good child protection and health and safety policies. It is a condition of membership that all teachers have insurance and they are individually responsible for risk assessment etc.

Although SMC is only responsible for instrumental and vocal lessons, pupils are encouraged to join ensembles and other musical activities available in Swindon.

Support for pupils' personal development was agreed to be good.

6. *Teaching and Learning*

The quality of teaching is a particular strength of SMC. Of the nine lessons observed during the visit all but one were agreed to be good or better and many had outstanding elements. The service carries out annual observations and out of the 43 observations carried out this year 40 were good or better, 15 were outstanding and none were unsatisfactory.

In the shared observations there was good consistency of judgements and all observers had a clear understanding of what constituted good teaching and learning.

In many lessons very good use was made of improvisation. In one outstanding lesson the concept of a new style of music was taught through improvising in two parts with the teacher. All teachers used their instruments effectively in the lesson and pupils learnt through the music.

No group teaching was observed although observation notes were available which evidenced good quality group teaching. Areas for development are for teachers to make lesson objectives explicit and for pupils to be encouraged to set their own challenging targets.

The quality of teaching and learning was agreed to be outstanding.

7. *Provision: Breadth, Access and Participation*

No judgement is made in this section as the responsibility for breadth access and participation lies with the LA. However all teachers are encouraged to signpost pupils to relevant ensembles. Tracking by SMC shows that many pupils take part in a range of activities provided by the LA and other music providers in Swindon. Good systems are in place to encourage transition between key stages and the SMC is considering appropriate pathways for primary pupils who have had a whole class instrumental experience in school.

8. Professional Development

Although all teachers are self employed it is clear through the consultation with the teacher members they value the INSET provided by SMC. CPD is a strong element of lesson observation carried out by the service. Observers clearly know the strengths and weaknesses of the teachers and offer good guidance to improve standards. Examples were available of improvement strategies for teachers who were considered less than satisfactory.

The impact of professional development was observed in the lessons, particularly in use of improvisation and in planning. Some peer mentoring is in place and the SMC encourages teachers to observe each other teach. There is an induction procedure for all new members which includes training when appropriate.

Professional development and performance management was agreed to be good.

9. Leadership and Management

The nature of the Cooperative is such that there are no salaried managers beyond the business manager employed. Management duties are carried out by members of SWC and charged on an hourly basis. This means that capacity is limited. Particular strengths of the leadership and management of SMC are the emphasis on raising the standard of teaching and in the administration of lessons to schools. The teacher handbook deals effectively with all aspects of instrumental and vocal teaching and good policies are in place to deal with day-to-day issues. A good range of data was available for the MSEP although lack of capacity means that analysis of some of the data is limited.

Recently strategic management has been directed towards relationship issues with the LA. This has had limited success and diverted limited resources away from developing the programmes offered by SMC. The service is now refocusing its strategic management efforts on evaluating its services and strengthening relationships with parents and schools in Swindon.

Leadership and management were agreed to be good.

10. Overall Effectiveness

Overall SMC is a good service with some outstanding features. Particular strengths are the quality of teaching and support for teacher members. Although no external funding is received the service provides good value for money in supporting its members to provide high quality individual and small group teaching and admin support. Agreed areas for development are to improve the use of data to raise standards and for the service to consider what services could be offered to schools, pupils and parents.

11. Self-Evaluation

Although SMC has limited management capacity, considerable extra time has been devoted to engaging with the self-evaluation process. Data has been gathered from staff, pupils, schools and teacher members and the leadership have given careful consideration to sourcing

appropriate evidence to support the SEF. An area for development is to analyse data to make judgements and inform improvements and developments.

It was agreed that the service's approach to the self-evaluation process was good.

12. Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion SMC provides an effective service to its teacher members. Particular strengths are:

- The quality of teaching and learning
- The system of monitoring and supporting self employed teachers.

Areas for development are:

- Use of data to raise standards
- To review the focus of the management team and consider the role of SMC in meeting the needs of schools, parents and pupils.