



BERKSHIRE MAESTROS

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 2008. 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 The summary is an internal, unpublished document, shared between the host music service, local authority and the DCSF.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* BERKSHIRE MAESTROS

This Evaluation Summary was prepared by Helen Mason (MSEP) following visits in March 2009. The evaluation was carried out and agreed with Berkshire Maestros. Evidence was collected through:

- paired observations which took place in six primary schools, one secondary school and three music centres with members of the SMT and the faculty heads of guitar and wind. Eight instrumental lessons, three wider opportunities sessions, five instrumental ensembles, one choir and one early years group were observed.
- interviews and discussions with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the two newly appointed Deputy Heads, the Finance Director, one of the Trustees, a contract manager for one of the Unitary Authorities (UA), and a Head Teacher from a primary school.
- scrutiny of documentation including the self evaluation form (SEF), two Local Authority Music Plans (LAMPs), staff and pupil surveys, data relating to pupil numbers, pupil survey results, staffing, numbers and types of lessons, accounts and records of lesson observations.

1 *Context and Characteristics*

Berkshire Maestros is a charitable trust that provides the music service for the unitary authorities (UAs) of Bracknell Forest, Reading, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, West Berkshire, and Wokingham. Reading is an average local authority in terms of socio economic circumstances and the other four UAs are amongst the ten most affluent authorities in the country.

The aim of Berkshire Maestros is to work in strategic partnership with the unitary authorities, schools, colleges and other institutions to provide the music needs of every child and young person in the former county of Berkshire.

At the time of the visit the CEO and finance director had been in post for less than a year and the two deputies had been in post for a half a term. A new structure, including faculty heads, will be fully in place from September 2009. These appointments had followed a period of considerable uncertainty, particularly during the period leading up to the recent change of leadership.

Priorities for the new team have been to restore staff moral and confidence, to put in place good governance and to revive relationship with key stakeholders including UAs and schools, and to review the services provided in the light of the government's aspirations for music.

2 *Views of Learners and Stakeholders*

Overall the service is well regarded by users with a survey of pupils rating 92% of lessons as good or better. Evidence from head teachers is more mixed. Based on visits by the new CEO to head teachers in 66 schools there is some evidence that the service has been regarded as expensive and inflexible. The new regime is now addressing this concern by reducing the cost of some services to schools and by adapting some programmes to fit in with schools' priorities

Most UA contract managers regard the service well. However, more work is needed in developing a shared understanding of Maestros as a strategic partner providing a valuable extended service, as opposed to a commercial organisation. For example, substantial charges are made to Maestros for the use of accommodation when they are providing additional music opportunities to schools or clusters of schools on their premises. The use of standards fund in this way reduces the amount available to deliver the government's aspirations to pupils and schools.

The service is drawing together the views of stakeholders in order to ensure that provision meets the needs of schools and pupils. Good use is being made of this feedback to inform developments.

3 *Achievement and Standards*

Many learners attain very high standards. This is particularly evident in lessons on orchestral instruments and in those that take place at music centres. Good progress was observed in some wider opportunities sessions and above average standards were observed in group and individual string lessons with primary age pupils. However the service has identified concern in other areas. For example, as confirmed by observations carried out during the visit, not all guitar pupils make as much progress as might be expected.

Standards in ensemble playing are high overall and good progress was observed in a number of groups such as in a string orchestra, a youth wind band and a recorder ensemble. The high quality senior percussion ensemble performs to high standards and had recently taken part in the Schools Prom organised by Music for Youth.

Overall achievements and standards are good.

4 *Support for Pupils*

Until September 2008 Maestros had offered schools in Key Stage 2 a range of wider opportunities programmes lasting 10 or 15 weeks in order to offer all schools a programme within the standards fund budget available to the service. Currently out of a total of 212 primary schools, 79 schools still have this shorter programme. However, because there was very little take up of lessons following these programmes Maestros is now piloting a programme lasting for a year in 44 schools in four of the UAs. This will increase to 102 schools across all 5 UAs in September. Consultation with head teachers by one UA contract manager would suggest that, after this funded first year, schools would be prepared to fund extension programmes to ensure at least 50% of pupils continue to learn an instrument, in line with the aspirations of the DCSF. These developments are, however, at an early stage and further consultation with all UAs and schools will be required to ensure that pathways beyond the initial programme are identified and available.

From January 2009 Maestros has taken on the role of Sing Up area leader for the five UAs and this will provide further opportunities for all pupils, although developments are at an early stage.

Short projects in non western music have been available to primary schools, where, for example, over a thousand pupils have taken part in African drumming workshops. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and pupil referral units (PRUs) is good. A special school, which has specialist music status, offers instrumental

lessons through Maestros to all pupils and a DJing project is available for pupils attending PRUs. Pupils with physical difficulties were integrated very well in a wider opportunities session.

Maestros staff offer a limited amount of professional development (CPD) to school based music teachers and there is potential to develop this area. Interviews with head teachers conducted by the CEO, including one during the visit would suggest that head teachers would welcome the opportunity to purchase INSET courses from Maestros.

Overall support for learners in schools and communities is satisfactory.

5 *Personal Development*

In music centres there is a good community atmosphere. Pupils clearly enjoy their music making and the social element of being part of a group or ensemble. In lessons good relationships with pupils were observed and there were some very good examples of classroom behaviour management. There is an intention to further develop a culture of volunteering and fundraising in the organisation to develop a greater sense of citizenship within families and pupils. The CEO has identified a gender imbalance in attendance at music centres and is seeking ways to encourage more boys to become or remain involved. Pupils benefit, socially and musically, by being involved in a wide range of activities and tours. A comprehensive tours and health and safety policy is now in place.

Attendance is good overall although managers have identified that a number of lessons do not start on time. This was confirmed during observations.

The personal development of pupils is good.

6 *Teaching and Learning*

Maestros judges the teaching and learning overall to be good. This judgement is based on a new programme of lesson observations with over 40 observations having taken place recently, covering about half of the teachers. Lessons ranged from unsatisfactory to outstanding but the majority were good or better. Four lessons were unsatisfactory and nine were outstanding. All of those judged as unsatisfactory were guitar lessons although during the visit one of the guitar lessons observed was satisfactory. Evaluations of lesson observations prior to this year were recorded as visit notes, but these do not include judgements on the overall quality of teaching and learning. It is evident that the new system of observations and performance management is improving managers' knowledge of the quality of teaching and is enabling support to be provided where required.

There was overall agreement on the quality of teaching and learning in the joint observations. During the observations of guitar lessons the faculty leader offered some good analytical suggestions for areas for development as well as identifying strategies to improve the teaching and learning.

The three wider opportunities sessions observed were all satisfactory or better. One was outstanding and the others contained outstanding elements. For example, in a musicianship session where two trust teachers were working in partnership with the class teacher and teaching assistants. Outstanding provision was observed where

pupils from a group of wider opportunities programmes were brought together on a Saturday afternoon to experience ensemble playing at a music centre.

In the best lessons teachers:

- ensure that every minute counts and is used effectively
- identify clear and precise learning objectives and structure the lesson well to meet these objectives
- use their instrument to model and often lead the music effectively with piano accompaniment
- plan for integration of theory within a context of practical music making.

In less successful lessons:

- there was inefficient use of time or the lesson started late
- the lesson was led by the needs of the music rather than the learning objectives identified for pupils
- teachers had limited strategies to deal with differentiation in the class.

The best ensemble direction was observed with the most senior pupils. Where junior groups were less successful, a model of rehearsal was being used which would be more suitable for advanced groups. Sessions would have been more successful if clear learning objectives had been identified and activities planned to address these. As with some of the less successful lessons, there was a tendency for the needs of the music to become more important than the needs of the pupils. Conversely outstanding teaching was observed where wider opportunities pupils were integrated into a junior ensemble in the music centre. In this session learning objectives were clear and there was an effective structure which included warm ups and games leading into a band rehearsal.

In order to further improve the quality of teaching, and to address areas that have been identified as having unsatisfactory teaching, Maestros is developing a culture of dialogue between teachers about pedagogy. It has also identified the need to enable teachers to observe or work alongside others.

Overall, based on the observations by SMT and those during the visit, the quality of teaching and learning is good.

7 Provision: Breadth, Access and Participation

The trust offers a wide range of instruments and ensembles in schools and music centres. Mini Maestros provides musicianship activities for the very youngest children and the developing wider opportunities programme is on track to include all KS2 schools by 2011. Out of 212 schools with KS2 pupils 44 schools are taking part in a whole year programme and a further 79 have a shorter programme. By September 2009 50% of schools will have a whole year programme in place.

There is a rapid increase in pupils taking up guitar and other popular music instruments. The trust is further broadening its provision and has recently introduced djembe, samba and gamelan projects, although at this stage there is limited take up from schools. DJing workshops have also been introduced and some projects have been targeted at PRUs and young people in danger of offending.

There is good provision for gifted and talented pupils through an award scheme which also involves attendance at related ensemble activities. Consideration is being given to extending this scheme to include a fast track scheme for pupils who are identified early as having particular musical potential. Good partnerships have been developed with a range of organisations including orchestras, universities, community music organisations and performance venues. Although many of the programmes offered to schools and pupils are at an early stage the trust is optimistic that take-up will increase.

Provision, breadth and access are satisfactory.

8 Professional Development

The SMT has identified priorities for teaching staff to develop a wider understanding of education, beyond that of instrumental teaching. The trust has maintained contracted teachers' entitlement to attend five INSET days and funds are also made available to pay all other staff to attend. The new system of lesson observations has CPD and performance management at the heart of the process. This complements the emphasis being given to the role of all senior and middle leaders in developing and sharing good music education practice.

An outstanding innovation is the employment of 'interns' who work alongside experienced teachers, particularly in the wider opportunities project and at music centres. Discussions are taking place with further education institutions to explore if a graduate teacher programme could be an option for these prospective teachers.

The trust has identified a number of ways to improve the professional development of its staff and has begun to implement some of these changes. However it also recognises that there are aspects that are not yet impacting on teaching and learning in practice.

Professional development is satisfactory overall.

9 Leadership and Management

The SMT provide outstanding leadership and vision. Effective management strategies have been instigated recently, dating from the appointment of an acting CEO and then further accelerated following the appointment of the current CEO. These ensure that management is at least satisfactory in all areas. Trustees now have a comprehensive structure of committees and better information, which enables them to make sound judgements to direct the work of Maestros. An area for development is communication both within the organisation to teachers and music centres and between UAs, schools and parents.

Overall leadership and management are good.

10 Overall Effectiveness

One UA contract manager remarked that Maestros is a 'magnificently improving organisation'. This view was supported by the evidence seen during the visit. Standards and achievement overall are good and teaching and learning are also good overall. However the SMT has identified several areas of further development. Plans to ensure opportunities for all children, while effective, are still at an early stage.

Overall Maestros offers very good value in relation to the proportion of standards fund available to the service. The proportion of funds spent on management and administration is low. Efficient use is made of a range of teaching staff including self employed staff in order to be cost effective and flexible. Some services to parents are considered expensive although the cost of providing a teacher is below average. This is often because high charges for teaching accommodation in schools are passed on to parents. Not all of the standards fund provided to the UAs is made available for Maestros to work strategically within UAs to maximise delivery of the DCSF's aspirations.

Berkshire Maestros is a good service overall which is responding well to the changing needs and priorities of schools and pupils.

11 Self-Evaluation

This service has a comprehensive self evaluation process with good consultation with schools, pupils and parents. As part of the self evaluation process a training day was organised for all staff to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and extensive feedback forms were available for the visit. Comprehensive statistics were available for the visit and the service has improved the presentation of data to inform the management and further development of the service. UA contract managers had an opportunity to comment on the self evaluation form and contributed to the findings of the moderation process. A suggestion was made that it would be helpful if better quality information was made available to schools and parents so that they develop a clearer overview of opportunities available to pupils as they progress.

12 Summary and Conclusion

The service is on track for at least 50% of schools to have a wider opportunities programme for a whole year by September 2009 and targets have been set for this to be in all schools by 2011. Effective strategies are being piloted to encourage pupils to continue to learn after this phase.

The employment of interns is a particularly innovative development which may be worth disseminating more widely.

The service has good capacity to improve and has made an excellent start in identifying and prioritising areas for development.

The agreed strengths include:

- The quality, vision and drive of the new leadership team.
- The overall quality and dedication of many of the teachers.
- High standards reached by the county groups and the music centre youth groups.

The agreed areas for development include:

- developing a culture of professional dialogue between teaching staff in order to disseminate recent educational initiatives and to ensure that all teachers understand the importance of identifying and using clear and precise learning objectives

- ensuring that lessons maximise the use of available time
- developing the role of middle managers to lead effective teaching and learning
- working with the UAs to improve the quality of information available to schools and parents.