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Mrs A Russell
Headteacher
Curry Rivel CofE Primary School
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Dear Mrs Russell

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 17 November 2010 to look at work in music.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with you, in your role of headteacher and music coordinator, and with pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of four class lessons and two instrumental lessons.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is broadly satisfactory.

- Attainment is average by the end of Year 6, representing satisfactory progress. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy exploring sounds on a variety of instruments. They respond enthusiastically to the teacher's instructions and develop an awareness of ways that sounds can be organised. In Years 1 to 4, pupils' ability to structure their musical ideas develops satisfactorily. This was demonstrated by pupils in Year 4 using their voices and a range of techniques on the Taiko drums to devise rhythmic compositions. However, progress is slower in upper Key Stage 2 because pupils have fewer opportunities to create and develop musical ideas.

- Participation in instrumental tuition is satisfactory overall. New arrangements for instrumental tuition were introduced this year, in conjunction with the local partnership cluster of schools. Provision is now through a commercial company which replaced the local authority Wider Opportunities initiative. Numbers participating have reduced because pupils' involvement is now reliant on parental choice and willingness to pay. The early signs are that pupils enjoy their new instrumental lessons and appreciate the broader choice of instruments that they can choose to learn. However, few pupils are involved in extra-curricular activities because opportunities are very limited.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Most lessons involve practical activities that are focused appropriately on the development of skills and musical knowledge. For example, in the Reception and Year 1 lesson seen, pupils were encouraged to explore sounds and make musical decisions. This helped them to develop skills in listening and responding and enabled them to make creative responses. Similarly, in a Year 4 lesson, all pupils were actively involved practising skills and techniques that had been learnt in previous lessons before using these, and their voices, successfully to create a short improvisation.
- There is some variation in quality of instrumental teaching. In a guitar lesson, for example, pupils had little opportunity to play the guitar because the teacher spent a lot of the time talking and explaining. This limited the extent to which the lesson was a musical experience. In contrast, a pupil played for a substantial proportion of a piano lesson. The teacher ensured careful attention to detail through a variety of well-chosen tasks, which resulted in much more musical outcome and better progress.
- Pupils enjoy using computers to create their own ideas but the tasks are sometimes too open-ended so that pupils become confused and do not produce a musically satisfying outcome.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- Pupils have opportunities to sing in lessons and assemblies and to perform to an audience and participate in larger-scale events.
- The curriculum plans for music are stronger in Years 1 to 4 than they are in upper Key Stage 2. Although older pupils listen regularly and respond to a range of music, they have more limited opportunities to perform on classroom instruments and to create their own ideas. The school's longer-term plan for music does not show as clearly how these particular aspects of the curriculum will be promoted.
- The school is benefiting from a strong partnership with the local cluster of schools which is enabling pupils to borrow instruments and to access a

broader range of instrumental tuition than that available in the previous year, through the Wider Opportunities initiative.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- Appropriate emphasis is placed on pupils enjoying and benefiting from music. The school responded to the shortcomings identified in the quality of the instrumental tuition last year and to the critical feedback from the pupils. The early signs are that the new arrangements are bringing about greater enjoyment for pupils although they have not yet led to increased participation.
- You report, rightly, that much of the evaluation of curriculum music has been based upon informal observations and recognise, correctly, that improving the breadth and depth of the curriculum in Key Stage 2 has had less attention.
- As music coordinator, you are aware of some of the national initiatives in music, such as Sing Up, and you have introduced some of the published resources into school to broaden the singing repertoire. This has not yet, however, led to singing standards being better than broadly in line with expectations.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing more regular opportunities for pupils in upper Key Stage 2 to create and develop musical ideas
- reviewing the curriculum plans for music to support clearer progression in musical skills and knowledge across all strands of the subject, particularly in upper Key Stage 2
- building on the new instrumental teaching programme to increase participation in instrumental lessons and a greater range of extra-curricular activities.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop music in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website under the unique reference number for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson
Her Majesty's Inspector