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Mrs M Yates  
Headteacher  
St Ambrose Catholic Primary School  
Leswell Street  
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Worcestershire  
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Dear Mrs Yates

### **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 13 January 2011 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, the arts curriculum team, the 'Play2Learn' tutor, and with pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of six class lessons and a whole-school singing assembly.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

### **Achievement in music**

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- Overall, attainment is broadly average throughout the school, representing satisfactory progress. Most pupils sing confidently with clear diction, although enthusiasm for vocal work diminishes in Year 6. There is some singing in rounds, but less evidence of more sophisticated part-singing.
- Pupils' progress in playing instruments and creating musical ideas is satisfactory, with standards broadly in line with age-related expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. A satisfactory number of pupils receive individual music tuition, including out-of-school. All Year 3 pupils receive recorder tuition, provided voluntarily by a governor, and all Year 4 pupils participate in the local authority's 'Play2Learn' programme where they are

able to experience playing woodwind and string instruments. However, the number of pupils continuing with instrumental tuition as a result of these initial experiences is low, partly, but not exclusively, because of the cost to families.

### **Quality of teaching in music**

The quality of teaching in music is broadly satisfactory.

- Lessons are organised professionally. Working relationships are positive, and teachers explain clearly what pupils are expected to do. Although lessons are led confidently, the focus on improving musical standards for pupils' progress to be better than satisfactory is insufficient. Typically, when mistakes are identified - such as errors of pitch or rhythm in singing work - teachers verbalise their explanations and instructions rather than showing pupils what is expected through musical demonstration. In other instances, pupils' efforts are praised and their further participation encouraged, but musical errors are not challenged at all.
- Teachers, supported by teaching assistants, make good efforts to ensure that all pupils are encouraged to participate in class music activities. However, less consideration is given to providing challenging work for the more able pupils, particularly those who receive additional instrumental tuition.
- Older pupils enjoy using computers to explore music. However, more emphasis is placed on teaching pupils to master the technical aspects of the software than on using the computer programme as a vehicle for developing their musical understanding.
- Audio and video recordings are made of school performances and special projects. The use of recordings to help pupils hear and evaluate their class music-making is more limited.

### **Quality of the curriculum in music**

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory overall.

- Commercially published curriculum resources are used to provide schemes of work in Key Stages 1 and 2. School leaders have actively embraced initiatives, such as the national instrumental and singing strategies, and local music events. Although these are all clearly organised, they are not sufficiently well coordinated to give a sense of musical progression as pupils move through the school. This includes linking the 'Play2Learn' programme with the rest of music curriculum provision.
- A well-established choir makes regular contributions to local community concerts and events. However, pupils currently have no opportunities to play instruments in ensemble, for example, in a school orchestra or band.
- Good arrangements are in place with the partner secondary school, which is a specialist arts college, particularly linked to instrumental work and extra-curricular music opportunities. The Year 6 class are currently being

prepared by a teacher from the high school for a concert at Birmingham Town Hall in February 2011.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in music**

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

- Good efforts have been made to build partnerships with other local providers and music education initiatives, helping to tackle an area for improvement in the school's previous Section 5 inspection report. Leaders and managers, including governors, have shown good commitment to improving provision through the introduction of new initiatives and providing good levels of funding for music education. All of this gives confidence in the school's capacity to make further improvements in music.
- Provision, including curriculum teaching, is monitored regularly but the emphasis on evaluating generic management and organisational issues is much greater than on considering the musical quality of teaching or of pupils' responses.
- Similarly, while participation in the local 'Sing Up' training has given teachers greater confidence in leading singing activities, they are much less confident in knowing how to improve the quality of pupils' vocal work. The school has not been involved in the national Key Stage 2 music professional development programme.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- raising standards further by:
  - increasing the amount and difficulty of part-singing
  - ensuring sufficient challenge for more-able pupils in class music lessons
  - increasing the proportions of pupils that continue with instrumental tuition following the 'Play2Learn' experience
- securing good teaching by:
  - ensuring that teachers always challenge inaccuracies in pupils' performance, particularly errors of pitch and rhythm
  - making greater use of musical modelling to show pupils what is expected
- coordinating the different aspects of provision, including the 'Play2Learn' programme, to plan and realise a greater sense of musical progression for pupils as they move through the school.

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 published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Mark Phillips**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**