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Mrs C Dean  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Dean

### **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 October 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 staff and selected Year 6 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; and observation of four class lessons, two of which were jointly observed; the choir rehearsals and the whole-class guitar lesson for Year 5 pupils.

The overall effectiveness of music is inadequate. Class curriculum lessons and additional instrumental tuition are taught by staff from the local authority's City Music School. The school pays a significant amount each year for this service. However, standards are low because of an unsatisfactory curriculum, significant weaknesses in the quality of provision and the monitoring, support and training of teachers by the City Music School.

#### **Achievement in music**

Achievement in music is inadequate.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy musical activities and sing with enthusiasm and a developing awareness of pitch and expression. As a result, their musical development is broadly in line with age-related expectations.
- Standards of vocal work are firmly in line with national expectations. Choral singing is confident and songs are sung expressively with good

diction. However, overall standards in other aspects of music learning are exceptionally low. This is because, apart from the 'wider opportunities' guitar teaching in Year 5, pupils have very few opportunities to develop instrumental skills or work creatively together in lessons. Musical terms are learnt in isolation and pupils are unable to make connections between them and other activities. Too many pupils have considerable gaps in their knowledge of music because of the inadequate curriculum and weaknesses in planning lessons.

- Pupils enjoy participating in their music lessons and try hard. However, they do not make the musical progress expected of them and this underachievement is evident throughout the school. Positively though, pupils describe the pride and enjoyment they feel when taking part in music festivals and school concerts.

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

The quality of teaching in music is inadequate.

- Music lessons are organised to provide a series of activities for pupils. Apart from their singing, little attention is given to improving the quality of pupils' musical response. These activities are not planned to meet pupils' individual needs and musical abilities and teaching is aimed generally at those with average ability; as a result, although most patiently wait their turn, others become disengaged.
- Teachers are confident when demonstrating singing and guitar techniques in lessons. Pupils try their best to emulate their teachers and improve these aspects of learning. However, because teachers' understanding of how pupils can learn more complex musical ideas and their skills of classroom organisation are both limited, it is difficult for them to improve and develop the quality of pupils' musical responses. Pupils' first ideas and responses are accepted far too readily and they are not challenged sufficiently to produce better and more musical work.

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

The quality of the curriculum in music is inadequate.

- A commercial scheme of work is used as a basis for music lessons. The single-sheet overview of the topics to be covered during a two-year cycle does not give sufficient indication of how pupils' musical skills and understanding are expected to progress over time. The scheme has not been adapted to ensure that it suits the needs and abilities of either teachers or pupils, and its use has not been monitored sufficiently. Apart from singing, significant areas of experience, such as composing work or listening to a diverse range of musical styles and traditions, are not covered in appropriate detail.
- All pupils in Year 5 have begun to learn the guitar as part of the 'wider opportunities' initiative. Although pupils enjoy this work, insufficient

planning and preparation for delivering these lessons means that they make insufficient progress.

- Members of the school choir perform a range of different songs and have won recognition at the local music festival. The 'Songbirds' singing group for pupils in Years 1 to 3 is popular and enables them to be involved in singing from an early age. Music is also used by class teachers to support and enhance other subjects, for example exploring sound in science lessons and singing songs in different languages.

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

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

- Monitoring of provision in music has been poor. Leaders recognise that they have not been rigorous enough in their own monitoring, relying too heavily on information provided by the local authority music staff. Despite pupils' considerable enthusiasm for music, they continue to underachieve.
- Leaders are determined, however, to improve provision and welcomed the chance to jointly observe lessons and to discuss the quality of provision.

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

- conducting an urgent review of provision with the local authority City Music School to ensure that, in both the class curriculum and additional instrumental lessons, work is planned to ensure that pupils' needs are met and that they make the progress of which they are capable.

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

**Marianne Young**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**