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Sr Moira Meeghan  
Headteacher  
Faith Primary School  
Prince Edwin Street  
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Dear Sr Moira

### **Ofsted 2010–11 good practice survey inspection programme: music**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 3 February 2011 to look at work in music and particularly the impact of the 'In Harmony' initiative, funded by the Department for Education and managed by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (RLPO).

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: discussions with you, the school staff, the Executive Director (Learning and Engagement) and teachers from the RLPO, pupils, and parents; scrutiny of relevant documentation, including lesson plans and assessments; observations of two group music lessons; and visits to the school orchestra and the West Everton Junior Strings rehearsals.

#### **Features of good practice**

- The school has benefited hugely from the significant funding provided for the 'In Harmony' initiative. You are well aware that, financially, this is substantially more than that received by other schools nationally through, for example, the 'Wider Opportunities' initiative. 'In Harmony' provides a string instrument and four hours of music tuition and ensemble work each week for every pupil in the school from Reception to Year 6.
- The quality of music teaching enjoyed by pupils in group lessons is outstanding. The consistency of approach, founded on strong principles that draw on a range of pedagogical and musical approaches, is commendable. Every opportunity is taken to immerse pupils in musical language, and not a minute is wasted. The 'In Harmony' teachers are

excellent musicians and their expert modelling sets the standard for the technical and musical quality that pupils are expected to match. At the same time, tasks are sequenced thoughtfully and musically so that pupils are able to master new ideas in small steps. Pupils of all ages contribute creatively by suggesting ways to improve their work and by inventing new melodic and rhythmic patterns to perform.

- A wide range of different teaching strategies is used, including rhythm and movement games. Visual aids and mnemonics are used with humour to develop pupils' understanding of musical notation. Most importantly, this work always follows and supports, rather than precedes, their aural understanding. Singing games and calls are an integral part of all lessons, although less attention is given to improving specific vocal techniques than is given to mastering instrumental skills. Consequently, the quality and confidence of pupils' singing are not as good as their instrumental work.
- Assessment is particularly good in the group lessons, which typically include between eight and 15 pupils with a member of the school staff. Here, close attention is given to every learner; misunderstandings are spotted and rectified quickly. Consequently, working relationships are excellent, pupils' behaviour is very good, and they make secure progress in developing their musical understanding.
- It is extremely positive that all school staff are also learning to play alongside the pupils. These teachers have learnt much from the programme, including how to use music more effectively to support other areas of learning. However, in larger ensemble rehearsals, better use could be made of their generic teaching expertise and experience to complement the musical expertise of the 'In Harmony' staff. In these rehearsals, some pupils occasionally encounter difficulties or lose their way, and they are not always identified immediately. Involving school staff more to support these children, as partners in the teaching team rather than as co-learners, would help to ensure that all pupils benefit equally from the rehearsals.
- It is very clear that participation in the 'In Harmony' programme has a much wider benefit for the pupils' personal and social development, as well as for their general educational attainment. While recognising the school's good fortune in being involved with the 'In Harmony' project, parents and staff speak passionately about the way that involvement in music has changed children's attitudes and expectations. As one parent said, 'music has given our children respect for themselves, respect for each other, and respect for education'. This was seen very clearly during the visit in the way that pupils helped each other to learn, and by the strikingly mature manner in which they prepared for and dismissed themselves from the orchestra rehearsal. It is clear, too, that the project has brought about a cultural change in the school's wider community, with parents and families placing prime value on music education, willingly and proudly supporting their children's musical learning and attending performances, including at the Philharmonic Hall.

**Areas for further development, which we discussed, include:**

- exploring ways that the school's teachers could be better used in orchestral rehearsals by supporting individual pupils when they experience difficulties or lose their way
- matching the attention given to developing pupils' vocal skills to that given to improving their instrumental techniques, so that the quality and confidence of their singing match the quality of their instrumental performance.

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.

Yours sincerely

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