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18 February 2011

Mrs J Longman
Headteacher
Fingringhoe Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
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Dear Mrs Longman

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 31 January and 1 February 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: discussions with staff, pupils and parents; scrutiny of relevant documentation; and observation of three class lessons, a singing assembly and a performance by the school choir.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- When children join the school, their musical attainment is broadly in line with expectations. Pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their musical skills and knowledge given their varied experiences before starting school. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in all aspects of music learning; however, composing is less well developed.
- Singing skills are developed in lessons and during whole-school singing assemblies. Although rounds are a feature, there is no part-singing. The school choir is no longer meeting regularly and pupils rightly say that they would welcome the chance to rehearse and sing regularly out of lesson time.

- A reasonable number of pupils are involved in the individual instrumental lessons. Playing in the end-of-term music assemblies is a popular event and does much to raise the self-esteem and confidence of those pupils who perform.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Teachers maintain pupils' general interest in music learning and working relationships in lessons are good, which encourages good behaviour. A key feature of the best lessons is successful modelling by teachers and use of audio recordings to help pupils listen to what they have played or sung. However, noting the progress made in music lessons is not yet firmly embedded throughout the school to identify what can be done to improve the quality of pupils' work.
- Most lessons feature practical activities that encourage active musical participation. However, with classes including not only a range of abilities but also a mix of age groups, lesson plans are not modified sufficiently and, consequently, insufficient attention is given to the learning needs of individual pupils. As a result, challenge is too variable for pupils and they make no better than satisfactory progress in curriculum lessons.
- In less successful lessons, pupils are not enabled to respond musically or to experiment with sounds. In these lessons, pupils' first responses are accepted too readily and musical rehearsal is not used to improve the quality of their work.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- The school works hard to provide pupils with a good range of additional musical activities. These include successful projects with other schools which include other subjects as well as music. The school also promotes the abilities of individual instrumentalists by giving performance opportunities in assemblies and other school gatherings. However, this term, no extra-curricular vocal or instrumental ensembles are meeting regularly.
- The school uses a commercial scheme of work to assure curriculum coverage across the school in line with national requirements. However, in some lessons there is insufficient adaption of this scheme to ensure that lessons fully meet the needs, interests and abilities of pupils or enable them to make any better than satisfactory progress.
- Leaders are aware that there are no computer programs for pupils to use so that they have alternative sound sources to explore.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

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

- You and the subject leader bring enthusiasm to your roles. You value the subject and recognise, rightly, that music is an important means of communication and expression and give all pupils the chance to be involved in musical activities, such as productions and celebrations.
- The music coordinator is currently on leave. However, the current coordinator has extended and developed the work already started, for example by providing appropriate musical training for staff. Other suitable plans are in place to evaluate provision, especially the way assessment is used, however, these plans have yet to impact on pupils' progress.
- The school benefits from involvement with singing workshops run by the local authority and all Year 3 pupils have the opportunity to learn either the violin or clarinet as part of the Wider Opportunities initiative. At present, monitoring the impact of this work on pupils' future involvement in instrumental lessons is not undertaken.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- securing good teaching by:
 - using rehearsal skills in all lessons to challenge and consolidate pupils' musical understanding
 - using an assessment system that monitors regularly the progress of individual pupils so that planning better reflects their individual needs, interests and abilities
 - ensuring that pupils of all ages and abilities are sufficiently challenged in lessons
- strengthening the curriculum by:
 - ensuring that the commercial scheme of work used is adapted appropriately to provide correct challenge and ensure musical progress for all pupils
 - considering the use of different computer programmes as an alternative way for pupils to create and control sounds
 - reintroducing extra-curricular ensembles as an integral part of music provision.

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