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Mrs S Case
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Case

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 16 February 2011 to look at work in music and particularly the impact of the 'Wider Opportunities' initiative, supported through the Standards Fund.

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 and the deputy headteacher, pupils, the head of arts from one of your partner secondary schools, and one of your visiting instrumental teachers; scrutiny of relevant documentation; observations of the whole-school singing assembly; a Year 5 class lesson; a Year 6 'Fusion' group session; two small-group instrumental lessons; and visits to rehearsals of the gospel choir, the guitar group, the clarinet choir, and the Recorder Consort.

Features of good practice

- Before the advent of the 'Wider Opportunities', there was already a strong tradition of pupils learning to play instruments. The school has made very creative use of the Standards Funding for music, awarded by the local authority following a successful bidding process, to broaden and deepen the range of musical styles and traditions that pupils experience in curriculum lessons. The school has amassed an extensive range of classroom instruments, including a small gamelan orchestra, sets of steel pans and African drums, information and communication technology (ICT) equipment, and a plethora of classroom percussion instruments. The school also owns a remarkable quantity of orchestral and band

instruments; every pupil who receives additional instrumental tuition has their own instrument, loaned by the school.

- The school employs its own team of seven instrumental teachers who offer tuition in 14 different instruments. This team is managed extremely well. Three quarters of all pupils in the school receive additional tuition. A significant proportion of the cost for this tuition is paid by parents; there is a remissions scheme that offers support to a very small minority of pupils.
- Every advantage is taken of musical opportunities beyond the school to widen pupils' musical experience. This includes participation in the National Festival of Music for Youth, concerts at venues such as the Royal Festival Hall, workshops with professional orchestras and the 'igospel' group, and participation in the Mayor of London's Thames Festival. Over the past 15 years, the school has built strong and sustained partnerships with a number of other local schools from both the state and independent sectors. The school is actively seeking to improve transition arrangements with all partner secondary schools, including through participation in the 'Musical Bridges' initiative.
- The effectiveness of the curriculum and extra-curricular provision is due, in no small part, to the dedication of the deputy headteacher who, in her role as music coordinator, has built and sustained the school's music work over 15 years. Music teaching throughout the school is characterised by great enthusiasm and strong subject knowledge. Teachers are themselves good musicians and are able to model confidently. They make frequent use of technical terms and develop students' knowledge of musical structures very well. However, a striking feature of all the teaching and musical direction observed was a tendency for teachers to over-explain or present concepts and ideas verbally when it would have been more effective to model musically. While all lessons include practical music-making activities, these verbal interludes interrupt the fluency of pupils' musical responses and concentration.

Areas for further development, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that teaching, in all lessons and rehearsals, makes maximum use of musical modelling and more succinct use of verbal explanations and presentations.

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