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Mrs B Mitchell
Headteacher
Christ Church C of E School
Elm Road
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Dear Mrs Mitchell

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 24 January 2011 to look at work in music and particularly the impact of singing and instrumental work as well as 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, staff, pupils and the School Improvement Partner; scrutiny of relevant documentation; and observations of Key Stage 1 and Year 3 music lessons. Individual instrumental lessons, recorder rehearsals and an assembly for Key Stage 2 pupils were also observed.

Features of good practice

- Throughout the school, pupils sing with enthusiasm and enjoyment. They demonstrate good intonation and expression. Words are clear and their singing is characterised especially by using a good range of dynamics. Older pupils in the choir sing successfully from memory, and are able to hold individual parts accurately both when singing unaccompanied and when accompanied by the orchestra and the piano.
- The school choir performs regularly in school and at external venues. In addition to promoting an appreciation of singing, these activities do much to enhance the school's standing and prestige within the community. Pupils spoke with great enthusiasm, not only of their own pride in performing but also of hearing others play their instruments.

One pupil summed up the thoughts of the group when they said 'It's nice to see our friends playing and we had no idea that some people could play instruments'.

- Standards are clearly above average in instrumental playing, singing and also in classroom work. The musical skills that pupils learn when singing are successfully transferred to whole-class music lessons. This was evident when Year 3 pupils performed individual rhythmic patterns against a clearly defined pulse producing a balanced group performance where different patterns linked together effectively.
- Several staff are involved in leading music activities. As a result, a number of ensembles, involving both boys and girls, meet regularly at both the infant and junior sites. You described how your teachers have benefited from taking part in the whole-class 'Wider Opportunities' instrumental teaching programme. Staff have shared teaching of these lessons with teachers from the music service which has raised their confidence and improved their musical skills. In spite of this positive work, you recognised that you do not, at present, monitor the numbers of pupils who continue learning instruments as a result of being involved in whole-class teaching.
- The classroom music curriculum is planned well, and good use is made of different published materials which are adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. Regular assessment of pupils' progress is made through a variety of mechanisms and this information is shared with pupils to help them identify what they need to do to improve. Nevertheless, this assessment practice is not evident in the whole-class instrumental lessons and is an area for future development.

Areas for further development

As we discussed, provision in the school could be further improved by:

- monitoring and evaluating the number of pupils continuing with instrumental lessons following their involvement in the wider opportunities programme
- ensuring that the good assessment practice featured in class lessons is also used in the wider opportunities lessons.

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

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector