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Mrs N Painter
Headteacher
St Joseph's RC Primary School
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Dear Mrs Painter

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 14 and 15 March 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: interviews with staff, a governor and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of six lessons, a choir rehearsal and a whole-school assembly.

The overall effectiveness of music is good.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is good.

- Pupils make good progress from their broadly average starting points, and by the end of Year 6 standards are above average. Pupils achieve particularly well in unison and part-singing where the vocal sound is well projected and, especially in whole-school singing, is characterised by a warm and rich tonal quality. Pupils use a wide range of musical instruments confidently and with good technical control. When creating their own music they choose and combine different sounds but are less skilled in using the sounds expressively, for example to convey specific moods or feelings.
- All pupils in Years 3 and 5 are involved in the whole-class 'Wider Opportunities' instrumental teaching programme, where they make good

progress. In addition, good numbers receive individual or small-group instrumental or vocal lessons. A good proportion of Key Stage 2 pupils take part in extra-curricular activities, particularly vocal groups, where they achieve well.

- Pupils' personal development through music is good. They enjoy their music making, are self-confident, and cooperate well with each other and their teachers. Older pupils act as singing leaders, where they support and encourage other pupils, both in formal and informal settings.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is good.

- Teachers and pupils have established very positive working relationships which provide a secure context for learning and lead to high levels of engagement.
- Lessons have a clear focus and sense of purpose, although in a few cases planning does not define precisely enough what pupils are intended to learn. In most lessons, teachers ensure that pupils are actively engaged in music making, so that they learn through first-hand experience; activities are well sequenced and well matched to pupils' needs. In a few lessons, however, too much time is spent on verbal explanations at the expense of musical demonstration or modelling.
- Teachers provide useful feedback to help pupils improve the quality of their work, including through using recordings of pupils' work to help them review their progress and consider how to improve. The school is piloting a good system for recording pupils' progress. It recognises, however, that this could be developed further to draw together information about pupils' achievements across all of the activities in which they are involved.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- The scheme of work is based on a published scheme, together with vocal resources provided through 'Sing Up!' Singing features very strongly in the school's life and pupils have many opportunities to sing within and beyond the school. There is, however, some inconsistency in the extent to which regular opportunities are provided for pupils to create their own music, as the school has rightly identified. The school has also prioritised the need to improve the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in music.
- The school's well-established partnership with the local authority music service involves pupils in a wide range of activities, including individual, small-group and whole-class instrumental tuition, ensembles and live music performances. Partnerships with other schools allow pupils to be involved in large-scale musical performances, while links with other musicians and organisations provide good support in, for example,

developing the quality of singing and pupils' understanding of traditional folk music.

- The school's good provision for singing is reflected in the emphasis that it places on choral work in its extra-curricular activities. In addition to a choir involving good numbers of boys and girls, the school also runs a boys' choir to encourage them to sing. Provision for instrumental ensembles is not as strong and plans are in place to develop this, particularly to provide opportunities for an even wider range of pupils to be involved.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is good.

- The school's clear vision for music is reflected in its focus on engaging all pupils in music and in raising the profile of music within and beyond the school community. The school's good use of external agencies and national initiatives is impacting positively on pupils' involvement and achievement in music.
- As part of the school's strategic development of music, an accurate evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement has been supported by a detailed but realistic development plan which identifies appropriate areas for improvement.
- The school's good capacity for sustained improvement is seen, for example, in its focus on developing teachers' confidence in teaching music. Relevant action is being taken in response to other identified priorities as seen, for example, in the carefully managed introduction of the system for recording pupils' achievements.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing the curriculum by:
 - providing more regular opportunities for pupils to create their own music
 - using ICT more regularly
 - broadening the range of extra-curricular activities, particularly through instrumental ensembles
- building on current good practice in teaching by:
 - defining more precisely and consistently what pupils are intended to learn in all lessons
 - developing the school's assessment and recording system, in collaboration with the local authority music service, by drawing together information about pupils' achievements in curriculum lessons, in the 'Wider Opportunities' lessons, and in instrumental and vocal tuition.

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

David Williams
Additional Inspector