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Mr S Brown
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Brown

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 15 and 16 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 and learners; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of three lessons and a whole-school singing practice.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and by the beginning of Year 1 standards are broadly average. During their remaining time in school, pupils make satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 6 standards are average.
- Pupils sang confidently with good tonal quality in the whole-school singing practice, although on some other occasions the tonal quality lacked refinement, with some pupils forcing the sound. Pupils' skills when playing instruments varies. For example, some use beaters securely and confidently on percussion instruments but others have less well-developed techniques which limit the extent to which they can play expressively. Similarly, when creating their own music, pupils choose and combine

different sounds but do not place enough emphasis on using the sounds expressively, for example to convey specific moods or feelings.

- A satisfactory number of pupils sing in the school choir or receive instrumental tuition. Pupils' personal development through music is good. They respond and enjoy their music-making, cooperating well with each other and their teachers.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Teachers and pupils have established positive working relationships which provide a good climate for learning. Teaching often involves pupils in practical music activities which enable them to learn through first-hand experience. The good progress made by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage results from the strong emphasis on active engagement in musical activities. However, the time spent on verbal explanations, as opposed to modelling or demonstration through music, in Key Stages 1 and 2 slows the pace of lessons.
- Planning generally identifies clearly what pupils are intended to learn, as well as do, in lessons. However, the learning focus does not always relate to the activities undertaken or to the assessment of pupils' learning at the end of the lesson.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used regularly to support pupils' learning. For example, a sequencing programme is used to combine pupils' own musical ideas with pre-recorded sounds and to layer and sequence sounds to create simple musical compositions.
- Teachers provide feedback to help pupils improve their work, including through discussion and questioning. School systems for recording pupils' achievements are clear and realistic. Video recordings of pupils' work are used to help them to celebrate achievement and to review progress.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is based on a published scheme of work which is used in a satisfactory way to meet the needs of pupils. The scheme provides clear guidance to support class teachers, many of whom are developing their skills and understanding in music, following a period of time when music was taught by visiting specialists. As part of the re-designing of the whole-school curriculum, the scheme of work for music is being modified so that it will be integrated into a thematic approach, while rightly maintaining a focus on musical skills and understanding.
- The school's policy of providing instrumental teaching without charge results in these opportunities being available more widely than would otherwise be the case. Although there is no current provision for whole-class instrumental teaching, this is to be reviewed in the light of future

budget projections. Opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities are limited to singing in the school choir. The school has identified the need to broaden the range of its extra-curricular provision in music.

- The school has a satisfactory range of partnerships including with the local authority music service and local schools. These enable pupils to benefit from valuable experiences within the school and beyond, including taking part in large-scale performances in prestigious venues.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- The school's clear vision for music is reflected in the focus on ensuring that music is both accessible and affordable for all pupils, and in the changes being implemented to integrate music more directly into the whole curriculum while maintaining its integrity as a subject.
- Good progress is being made in developing teachers' confidence in leading music with their own classes, including through providing support and ongoing professional development. It is, however, too early to fully evaluate the success of this development and the school recognises that further training is required.
- The school's self-evaluation has identified important areas for development, including an ongoing emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and broadening the range of opportunities offered to pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the quality of teaching by:
 - continuing to provide professional development opportunities to further teachers' subject skills, knowledge and understanding
 - ensuring a more consistent link between the learning focus for lessons and the activities undertaken
 - placing greater emphasis on musical modelling and demonstration as opposed to verbal explanations
 - focusing more strongly on the expressive qualities of music when pupils perform and create their own music
- strengthening the curriculum by:
 - completing and implementing the revised scheme of work
 - broadening the range of extra-curricular activities and partnerships.

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