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Mr R Chamberlain
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Chamberlain

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 4 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: discussions with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; joint observations of three lessons with you; and an assembly for the whole school.

The overall effectiveness of music is inadequate. Most lessons are planned carefully to ensure that pupils are involved in music activities. However, the curriculum does not promote pupils' musical progression and the current leadership, which has only just been put in place, has not yet had time to rectify these weaknesses and to develop extra-curricular activities.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is inadequate.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are provided with a satisfactory range of music activities which interests and involves them in singing and using musical instruments. However, by the end of Year 6, mainly because of uneven curriculum coverage and weaknesses in teaching, pupils have some significant gaps in their musical skills, knowledge and understanding. Consequently, their achievement and musical progress over time are inadequate.

- Although pupils sing regularly and take part enthusiastically in music activities and lessons, their compositions reveal limited awareness of musical styles and structures.
- Very few pupils have individual instrumental lessons and there are currently no music extra-curricular activities. However, all pupils are involved regularly in school productions and celebrations.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is inadequate.

- The quality of lesson planning varies between classes with the best indicating how pupils will be challenged and provided with work that meets their individual needs and abilities. However, too often teachers' expectations are not high enough, their subject knowledge is insecure and lessons take insufficient account of pupils' previous musical skills. For example, although pupils in Class 3 learn to read traditional notation this skill is not developed further in Class 4.
- Assessment is not yet firmly embedded throughout the school so that pupils' progress over time can be noted. However, in some lessons, pupils do make progress because these individual lessons are planned carefully. Working relationships are secure and pupils' enjoyment of music-making is evident in lessons.
- Audio recordings are not made and pupils are often unsure how to improve their work. Pupils' first responses are accepted too often in lessons and, thus, the overall musical quality of their work does not improve.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is inadequate.

- Teachers plan music lessons using a commercial scheme of work as a guide and their ability to do this, so that it meets pupils' needs and abilities, is varied. The music curriculum does not cover all required aspects and tasks are not sequenced sufficiently well to ensure that learning is consolidated and extended. Musical activities in lessons generally focus on practical activities. Insufficient coordination is currently available to ensure that pupils' musical skills and knowledge are developed systematically as they move from one class to another. As a result, for example, pupils' understanding of multicultural music and their use of additional sound sources, such as computer programs, is very limited.
- Although pupils are involved regularly in school productions and perform with pupils from the other two schools in the federation, there are no extra-curricular music activities. Pupils rightly express the wish to be able to make music together in groups.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

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

- Dialogue and evidence gathered during the inspection indicated a clear understanding of the issues that have led to pupils' lack of musical progress. Reorganisation of subject leadership has only recently been implemented. Consequently, leaders are yet to fully take on their roles and responsibilities, map provision, implement an effective assessment system and ensure that pupils make appropriate progress as they move through the school.
- Leaders are motivated to improve the profile of music in the school and have a broad awareness of national musical initiatives. They are aware and regret that the school can no longer afford the cost involved so that pupils can take part in the 'Wider Opportunities' whole-class instrumental lessons this year.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the progress made and the standards pupils reach by:
 - ensuring that the staff teaching music have secure subject knowledge
 - ensuring that an appropriate assessment is used to help teachers plan lessons that better meet pupils' differing learning needs
 - making use of audio recordings so that pupils can hear and celebrate their successes as well as identifying ways of improving their work
- ensuring that the music curriculum meets the needs of all pupils by:
 - adapting the commercial scheme appropriately to provide the correct challenge and systematic development of pupils' musical skills and understanding as they move through the school
 - considering how computer programs can be included in lessons
 - implementing extra-curricular activities so that pupils can rehearse and perform music together out of lesson time
- improving the leadership and management of music by:
 - establishing a regular monitoring system to evaluate and develop the quality of provision for the subject
 - implementing an assessment system that monitors regularly the progress made by pupils.

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