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Mrs A Traer-Goffe  
Headteacher  
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Cambridgeshire  
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Dear Mrs Traer-Goffe

### **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 2 and 3 February 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, pupils, parents and governors; scrutiny of relevant documentation; observation of seven part-lessons, one of which was jointly observed, an assembly for Reception and Key Stage 1 pupils, and a rehearsal by the school band.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

### **Achievement in music**

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- When children join the school, they have limited experience of singing and using instruments. The variety of music activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good; children enjoy making music together. They also enjoy listening to music from different countries, for example music from China was helping them celebrate the Chinese New Year.
- Although all aspects of music learning are covered broadly from Years 1 to 6, leaders recognise that composing work has much less emphasis than performing and listening. Singing is a regular feature of music lessons and assemblies and although rounds are a feature, there is no part-singing. Pupils' compositions reveal limited awareness of structure

and musical styles, which is mainly because of a lack of clarity when tasks are set. This unevenness of coverage, and the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school, result in pupils attaining below average standards overall. However, in relation to their starting points, this represents satisfactory progress by the end of Key Stage 2.

- The proportion of pupils involved regularly in individual instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities has increased significantly in recent years. Pupils very much welcome the frequent music productions and concerts which are popular with parents and do much to raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Older pupils talked enthusiastically about the 'singing stops' in the playground, where they can sing familiar and new songs with their friends and younger pupils.

### **Quality of teaching in music**

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Teachers generally maintain pupils' interest in music learning. However, because musical concepts and keywords are not always taught systematically and some teachers lack confidence in their subject knowledge, pupils do not make better than satisfactory progress.
- A key feature of the best lessons is successful modelling by teachers which enables pupils to understand the musical purpose of learning. However, the early use of traditional notation limits progress for those pupils who find this system challenging. Although rehearsal techniques are used successfully in ensemble rehearsals, too often, in class lessons, pupils' first responses are readily accepted and therefore the musical quality of their work does not improve.
- Although assessment is used successfully in the Early Years Foundation Stage to check how well children are doing, it is not yet embedded throughout the school. Currently, teachers mainly check whether pupils have completed an activity. Even though audio recordings are made to celebrate performances and for pupils to hear their work, too often pupils are unsure of how to improve their work musically. However, those who have individual instrumental lessons are considerably more adept at identifying where their performance can be improved.

### **Quality of the curriculum in music**

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory with good features in enrichment and extra-curricular activities.

- Leaders have used money from the Standards Fund sensibly to provide whole-class instrument lessons for all pupils in Years 1 to 5. They plan to extend this to Year 6 next year. These lessons augment other music learning in the classroom. This work, together with the very good range of extra-curricular activities and musical opportunities, extends pupils' awareness of and enjoyment in music. As a result, the school's musical profile in the local community is considerably enhanced.

- The school uses a mixture of commercial schemes of work to assure curriculum coverage across the school in line with national requirements. Some teachers are more skilful than others at adapting these materials to ensure they meet the needs, interests and abilities of their pupils. Leaders acknowledge that pupils' understanding of multi-cultural music, and their use of additional sound sources, such as computer programmes, is very limited.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in music**

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

- Leaders, supported by members of the governing body, are motivated to improve the profile of music in the school. As a result, the proportion of pupils involved in music and the opportunities provided have increased significantly and ensure good musical inclusion for all pupils. Careful analysis, done regularly by leaders, indicates that pupils from different genders and attainment levels are involved similarly in music.
- External funding is used well and the school has also involved staff in music workshops through the national singing strategy. Consequently, teachers have improved their own singing skills, their enjoyment of music, and their confidence to teach music lessons.
- Notwithstanding these strengths, the monitoring of teaching quality, the use of assessment to measure the progress made by pupils and the comparative lack of attention given to the classroom curriculum, are underdeveloped. Leaders recognise these areas need to be developed.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- securing improvements in teaching to improve progress by:
  - using rehearsal skills in lessons to improve pupils' musical answers and responses
  - using an assessment system that monitors regularly the progress of individual pupils so that planning always challenges them successfully
  - ensuring that traditional musical notation is not a barrier for some pupils
- strengthening the curriculum by:
  - ensuring that the commercial scheme used is adapted appropriately to provide correct challenge and develop pupils' musical skills and understanding systematically as they move through the school
  - considering how music from other cultures and appropriate use of computer programmes can be included in 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 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**