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5 April 2011

Mrs B Rouse  
Headteacher  
Kingsmeadow Community Comprehensive School  
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Dear Mrs Rouse

### **Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: music**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 9 and 10 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 selected students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of two lessons, one of which was jointly observed, individual instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of music is inadequate. Students who play in the steel pan groups enjoy making music together, give enthusiastically of their time and achieve well in local and national events and competitions. Since September 2010, music is now part of the creative arts department and although senior leaders have identified weaknesses in provision, the support provided has not yet impacted positively on students' achievement.

#### **Achievement in music**

Achievement in music is inadequate.

- Although music has been and continues to be offered as an option choice, no students are studying GCSE music and only one student has completed the course during the last three years.
- In Key Stage 3, standards in all aspects of music learning are below average because of the weaknesses in teaching and the planned curriculum. As a result, students' musical skills are not developed systematically as they move through the key stage. On occasions,

students make satisfactory progress in individual lessons, often because of their application to the task set and their understanding of music derived from their involvement in individual instrumental lessons. Inspection evidence indicates that students do not add their own creative musical ideas when composing. Overall, taking into account students' abilities and prior experience when they join the school, they make inadequate progress by the end of Year 9.

- The proportion of students participating in additional instrumental lessons is broadly satisfactory with a similar number of boys and girls involved. Significantly more girls than boys are involved in the steel pan groups which is the only extra-curricular activity provided. Students from all ability groups are represented but there is a noticeable drop off from both of these as students get older.

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

The quality of teaching in music is inadequate.

- Teachers plan the activities to be completed in lessons carefully and choose materials and resources that appeal to students. Brightly coloured workbooks provide appropriate and helpful information about different music topics that are to be studied. Students welcome the assessment information in these books and the individual comments that teachers have started to provide, which help them to understand how to improve their work.
- Nonetheless, inspection and other evidence indicates that students make less than expected progress in lessons because the teachers' expectations and challenge set for students are often too low. Lessons are sometimes over-directed by teachers and students have limited opportunities to contribute their ideas and suggestions and to evaluate their work musically. Although students' behaviour is generally satisfactory, at times they choose to become passive and engage in non-musical activities which restrict their progress in lessons.
- Audio recordings are made, generally to evidence that a unit of work has been completed. Therefore, these recordings are not used effectively to help students understand how to improve their work.

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

The quality of the curriculum in music is inadequate.

- The scheme of work for students in Years 7 to 9 broadly covers all requirements, including information and communication technology. However, singing is underrepresented and some aspects are covered superficially. Leaders recognise that curriculum planning needs to improve in order to provide an appropriate balance of musical learning, so that students are able to understand music in different contexts. Presently, the curriculum emphasises completion of activities rather than identifying clearly the challenge provided for different ability groups.

- The regular 'Learning4Life' days include workshops from professional musicians and are much enjoyed by students. However, incorporating these events and developing students' awareness of different musical cultures within the overall curriculum planning are underdeveloped.
- The only extra-curricular ensembles are the steel pan groups. Students, enjoy being involved in these successful ensembles. Their enthusiasm was demonstrated clearly by their commitment to rehearsal. However, students are right to regret the fact that there are no other music ensembles.

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

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

- Recently, senior leaders have taken a proactive approach towards improving music provision. Monitoring has identified weaknesses in teaching and one of the first steps undertaken has been to include music within the creative arts department. This enables staff to share generic teaching skills and suggestions for improvement. However, leaders recognise that they need to provide appropriate subject support and to establish small, measurable priorities to ensure that music provision improves.
- Students in the steel pan groups and some students in Years 8 and 9 have started to complete their portfolio for the Arts Award accreditation. This is a commendable initiative but it does not alleviate poor uptake of other music qualifications, particularly GCSE.
- Despite well-established and regular timetabled music lessons where pupils from feeder primary schools are taught music, information regarding their involvement in national music initiatives is unknown and therefore not able to be used when planning curriculum provision for students in Year 7.

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

- raising students' achievement by:
  - increasing expectations of the musical quality to be achieved in lessons through the challenge provided for different ability groups
  - using assessment and prior information about students' musical knowledge and abilities to plan musically challenging lessons
  - checking students' understanding during lessons so that teachers and students know what they have learnt and how to improve their work musically
  - ensuring that all aspects of the music curriculum, including composition, are equally represented and linked appropriately to external events and workshops

- ensuring that all planning shows clearly the musical progress students should make as they move through the school
- seeking external subject support to enable school leaders to draw up a measurable plan in order to improve the quality of music provision.

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**