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Mr I Price  
Acting Headteacher  
St John's Church of England Primary School  
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Dear Mr Price

### **Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: music**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 3 and 4 May 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 observation of a hymn practice for the whole school, and a violin lesson for a group of Year 3 pupils as part of the Wider Opportunities instrumental teaching programme, taught by staff from the local authority music service.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

### **Achievement in music**

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- A varied programme of music activities, including singing and using musical instruments, successfully involves and engages children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Singing has a high priority throughout the school, both in lessons and during whole-school music activities. Composition is not such a regular feature in lessons and, consequently, pupils' compositions and knowledge of musical styles are underdeveloped. As a result, by the end of Year 6, pupils make uneven progress in different aspects of music learning and overall their achievement is satisfactory.
- Pupils' self-esteem and confidence are supported and developed well by their involvement in music clubs and additional music concerts and

productions. Currently, though, very few pupils have individual instrumental tuition.

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

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and they are generally confident to lead and organise music activities in their classrooms. Working relationships are positive and teachers successfully engage pupils in music lessons where routines are well established, especially when using instruments.
- The best lesson planning ensures that pupils are given work that meets their individual needs and abilities. Audio recordings are made and are used regularly during lessons so that pupils can identify how to improve their work. However, these positive features are not present in all lessons and this restricts pupils' progress. Assessment of pupils' progress at the end of each unit of work is noted, but using this information to inform next steps of learning is not yet firmly embedded across the school.
- Low expectations and insufficient challenge in the whole-class instrumental ('Wider Opportunities') sessions result in Year 3 pupils making inadequate progress in these lessons. Simple musical errors are left uncorrected and insufficient links are made between pupils' aural and rhythmic work, and their violin playing.

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

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- A commercial scheme of work is used to ensure that the required aspects of the curriculum are covered. However, leaders recognise that, in practice, composition is not given sufficient focus and pupils' skills in this area are underdeveloped. Some teachers are more confident than others in adapting the published materials and ensuring that activities and additional work in lessons are related so that pupils' understanding is consolidated.
- Pupils are regularly involved in school productions and older children benefit considerably from working with students from a neighbouring secondary school. Christmas was a busy time for pupils, many of whom enjoyed singing at different events in the local community and especially when the Christmas lights were switched on. This term, although other music clubs meet regularly, the choir does not.
- The curriculum provided for pupils receiving whole-class violin lessons lacks structure and does not plan for different ability levels. Pupils are given activities but are unclear what they are to learn in lessons.

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

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

- The subject leader provides individual support for staff and is enthusiastically encouraged by senior leaders and governors. Formal monitoring of classroom provision is planned for later this term. Consultation with pupils and parents has already been undertaken and used to identify positive aspects of the current music provision. Leaders and governors are united in their determination to raise the profile of music and to ensure that all music opportunities, especially the national 'Wider Opportunities' whole-class instrumental programme, are evaluated and the financial costs of these are considered carefully to ensure that the school receives appropriate value for money.
- Good links have been re-established with the local secondary school which helps raise pupils' musical aspirations and enables them to encounter and use different facilities and to hear different types of music.
- Leaders recognise that assuring best practice in planning and delivering music lessons, as well as accurately assessing pupils' progress, needs to be a clear priority and shared with all staff.

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

- improving the progress made and the standards pupils reach by:
  - ensuring that all teachers make use of assessment information to provide music activities and challenge that meet pupils' differing needs
  - making sure that all teachers are confident to adapt published materials to plan lessons that meet individual needs and provide appropriate challenge for all abilities
- in partnership with the local authority music service, ensuring that the 'Wider Opportunities' whole-class instrumental teaching is appropriately planned and engages all pupils in music learning by:
  - improving the quality of the teaching and the curriculum so that pupils' different ability levels are considered and all are able to make good progress
- improving the leadership and management of music by:
  - ensuring that all actions and musical activities are linked to improving pupils' attainment and progress

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**