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20 May 2011

Mr I Taylor
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Taylor

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 6 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: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of five lessons, including instrumental tuition.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- Standards in music are broadly average. Pupils make good progress in singing, reaching above average standards by Year 6. They pick up melodies quickly when learning new songs and show a good awareness of rhythm. Both boys and girls participate enthusiastically when singing. This is notable in assemblies, for example, when pupils sing in three parts, holding their melodic lines confidently and making a full sound.
- Progress in creating musical ideas is less effective. Pupils enjoy working in groups to compose pieces but they struggle to develop their work beyond initial ideas. This is largely because they do not have sufficiently broad knowledge and experience of musical structures.
- A good proportion of pupils takes part in instrumental tuition and extra-curricular activities although closer analysis shows that many more girls

participate in the choir than boys. All pupils in Year 3 receive instrumental tuition through the local authority's Wider Opportunities programme (In2Music), and over a third of pupils over the last two years have opted to continue with tuition in Years 4 and 5.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Following several years when the former music leader taught all curriculum music lessons, class teachers now teach their own music, supported by guidance and training from the new music leader. Singing is taught effectively. Teachers' confidence and expertise are developing well but expectations are not always high enough when pupils are playing classroom instruments and creating musical ideas. Teachers also sometimes spend too much time talking, questioning and explaining, thus limiting the opportunity for pupils to engage in purposeful, practical activity.
- The Wider Opportunities sessions are highly practical and well structured. Pupils clearly enjoy them. Warm-up activities are related to subsequent pieces that pupils play, so that the pupils understand the links. Aspects of musical knowledge and theory are taught appropriately through practical music-making.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- Singing is a strong aspect in the music curriculum. Pupils learn a good range of songs, including part-songs, and encounter repertoire of a variety of styles and traditions. Pupils' singing is supported effectively by a number of school performances during the year, including some larger-scale events where schools join together at the Guildhall Southampton.
- A revised curriculum is currently being developed to reflect the changed arrangements for teaching music. Some useful resources are being compiled to support teachers' planning and to link in with other subjects. For example, the same film excerpt is used in English lessons and as a starting point for pupils' music compositions. While this approach helps pupils to make connections in their learning, the planning is not always sufficiently explicit about the specific music skills and understanding that are to be developed.
- The new curriculum does not yet provide an overview to demonstrate how musical skills will be taught systematically during Key Stage 2 and to help teachers know what to expect of their pupils, including those who learn instruments. This is particularly the case for composing and performing on classroom percussion.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- The headteacher and music leader have an accurate view of the current effectiveness of music in the school. They have identified appropriate priorities for improvement, including the need to strengthen composing and aspect of performing. These are already included as priorities in the current action plan for music.
- Music is an important part of school life. It is valued by leaders, staff and pupils and there is a drive to develop music further. Effective and well-established links have been built with the local authority's music service. The governing body shows strong support for music. For example, additional funding is allocated to subsidise the cost of instrumental tuition. This reduces the costs for parents. It also ensures that pupils from families who may be encountering financial hardship are not excluded.
- Effective use is made of the materials and ideas available through 'Sing Up', the national strategy. These have had a positive impact upon singing standards in the school, as well as pupils' enjoyment of singing, because they have been matched by good teaching of vocal skills.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- strengthening the focus on composing to improve pupils' achievement in this aspect of music
- ensuring that the new curriculum plans are supported by a clear overview that shows how musical skills will be developed from year to year, particularly for composing and performing on classroom instruments
- extending the programme of professional development for class teachers, to build awareness of the standards they should expect of their pupils, including those who learn instruments.

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

Margaret Dickinson
Her Majesty's Inspector