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17 May 2011

Mrs R Sutton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Sutton

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

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in music to attain broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Progress in singing is stronger, and both boys and girls respond enthusiastically to vocal work. Creating musical ideas is relatively weaker. This is because composing is not covered as consistently in Key Stage 2. Pupils in Year 6 have fewer opportunities to compose and to use classroom percussion instruments than they do in other years.
- The overall proportion of pupils involved in music clubs is above average. However, this is largely due to very strong take up by girls. Few boys participate and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are also not well represented.

- The proportion of pupils learning instruments through the school is slightly lower than could be expected. This has rightly been identified by you and the music leader as a priority area.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory overall.

- Lessons involve an appropriate balance and range of practical activity. In most classes, pupils enjoy these practical aspects, joining in well with songs and, when given the opportunity, playing instruments.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, children clearly enjoy music sessions. They learn to control sounds and respond to musical ideas through singing, moving and playing instruments. Teaching focuses skilfully on careful listening and gives children time to think, make choices and share their ideas about the music they hear or play.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, teaching develops pupils' knowledge about key music vocabulary, introduced appropriately within singing, composing or performing tasks. However, lessons tend to be overdirected and this limits the opportunities for pupils to contribute, make their own decisions and develop their creativity. Planning focuses more on the activities that pupils will undertake with less emphasis on how effectively these will develop relevant and essential musical qualities and outcomes.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- Pupils have opportunities to participate in an adequate range of music clubs. The school also organises a number of opportunities for pupils to perform in the community and to join with other schools for larger-scale music events, for example, annual festivals in the Fairfield Halls. Links with the church and diocese are strong and all pupils take part in special services when music plays an important and valued part in the worship.
- Pupils have opportunities to learn a range of instruments. Some visits by instrumental groups and professional performers are organised to broaden pupils' knowledge of different styles, genres and traditions, and to broaden their experience of live music.
- Planning in music is mostly based on a commercial scheme. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the teachers' termly plans provide clear detail on the specific aspects of musical and creative development to be promoted in each lesson. The school does not have a similar overview for Key Stages 1 and 2 to support how musical skills and understanding will be developed from year to year. Although singing has good prominence, some aspects in the curriculum are weaker. For example, composing and performing on instruments are not given enough priority in Year 6.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- The school has a satisfactory action plan for music based on your and subject leader's evaluation of music provision. Some appropriate priorities have been identified. For example, arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' progress in music in Key Stage 1 have been improved, and plans are in place to extend this to Key Stage 2.
- The school has a well-established partnership with the borough's music service and works closely with other schools in the borough to mount joint music events. These provide pupils with memorable experiences of performing on a larger scale and are very much enjoyed.
- The subject leader has not had sufficient opportunity for professional development in music over recent years. There has been no involvement with national initiatives such as 'Sing Up' or the Wider Opportunities programme, to enable more pupils to take up instrumental tuition. This is one reason why the proportion of pupils learning instruments is lower than is typically found.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the participation of boys and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in music clubs
- ensuring greater focus on the musical learning that will take place when planning lessons and providing more opportunities for pupils to make decisions, contribute ideas and make creative choices
- devising a plan which gives an overview of how skills and knowledge in music will be developed progressively as pupils move through the school
- providing opportunities for the subject leader to benefit from professional development in music.

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