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Mrs J Rowlands
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Rowlands

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 8 June 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 and photographic evidence; observation of four lessons, two of which were jointly observed with you; and whole-school singing assemblies and instrumental and choir rehearsals. A discussion was also held with the part-time primary music adviser for the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of music is good.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is good.

- From a low starting point, pupils make good progress to reach average standards by the end of Year 6 in creating and performing their own music. From the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards, they are encouraged to lead activities and work together in small groups. These skills are developed well as they move through the school.
- Pupils sing enthusiastically and understand the importance of good diction, intonation and dynamic variation. However, the extent to which they demonstrate this understanding varies because rehearsal of these aspects of songs is inconsistent, particularly in whole-school singing.

- Although no pupil receives one-to-one instrumental tuition, many are involved in music clubs and ensembles, including all Year 6 pupils who continue to learn brass instruments. This is despite the school no longer being involved in the local authority music service 'Wider Opportunities' programme. Performances in school and at external venues, for example with the Halle Orchestra at the Bridgewater Hall or with the local community samba band, enable all pupils to experience working with professional musicians. Consequently, pupils' self-confidence, personal musical skills and sense of community involvement are significantly enhanced.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is good.

- Most lessons are planned carefully, identifying clearly and precisely what pupils are to learn. Pupils understand explanations and share and discuss this information with their peers. Consequently, they give each other appropriate support and make good musical progress.
- Pupils are given good opportunities to work together, create their own music and to learn through first-hand experience. However, occasionally the musical skills of more able pupils are not sufficiently well-planned for and developed in lessons.
- Teachers make careful use of the relatively new assessment system so that they can monitor pupils' musical progress. Although some audio recordings of pupils' work are made, the school recognises that this strategy is underused for helping pupils to assess, discuss and make improvements to their own work during lessons.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is good.

- The scheme of work ensures that all aspects of music learning are integrated well and enables pupils' musical skills and knowledge to be developed progressively as they move through the school.
- Although no pupils have individual instrumental lessons, their interest and involvement in music is evident through the high numbers who take part in instrumental and vocal ensembles.
- Good opportunities are provided for all pupils to take part in public performances in school, or with other schools, at local venues. Leaders actively encourage all pupils to be involved and many enjoy leading ensembles and playing a prominent role in these events. For example, pupils' rhythmic and leadership skills were evident during the samba band rehearsal before performing at the local carnival.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is good.

- Senior leaders demonstrate clearly that music is an important means of communication and expression, and they give all pupils the chance to be involved in musical activities. These events foster well pupils' social development as well as their engagement in music. Partnerships between the school and external organisations are considered carefully for their benefits to pupils' musical development. This includes the recently established cluster group of primary schools' music coordinators.
- Good leadership has ensured good integration of all aspects of music learning, including regular classroom music and all additional activities.
- Last year, the current Year 6 pupils enjoyed and benefited from learning to play brass instruments as part of the 'Wider Opportunities' instrumental programme. This year, the school were unable to be involved due to the financial cost involved. Happily, leaders recognise the benefits of this programme and have reorganised the curriculum so that these pupils can continue learning their instruments under the supervision of a member of the school staff.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the quality of singing to match the quality of the best music learning by rehearsing sections of songs so that weaker aspects, especially intonation and clarity of diction, are improved
- making lessons even more challenging and enjoyable by:
 - ensuring that more able pupils are given work that meets their particular needs
 - using audio recordings as a regular part of lessons so that pupils can make informed improvement to their performing and composing work
- considering how pupils' interest in learning to play brass instruments can continue next year.

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