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Mr C Faulkner
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Dear Mr Faulkner

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 28 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: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; visits to eight curriculum music lessons, a whole-class recorder lesson and a small-group violin lesson; and observation of rehearsals of the 'Glee Club' and percussion group.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is broadly satisfactory.

- There is considerable variation in the musical confidence and experience of children when they join the school. This is matched by the variability in musical standards reached in all year groups. Overall, standards remain below average throughout the school but not significantly so, including in creating musical ideas. This represents satisfactory achievement, given pupils' starting points.
- The school has used delegated Music Education Grant funding for music to employ a part-time specialist recorder teacher. All Year 3 pupils receive tuition and they have made good progress since starting lessons.

Supportive and attractive accompaniments by the teacher help pupils to develop their listening effectively, as well as their performance skills.

- An increasing number of pupils benefit from additional instrumental tuition on clarinet or violin. The 'Glee Club' is extremely popular with pupils and is very well attended. Singing is assured although mostly in unison; in rehearsal, as much attention is paid to developing movement and visual image as is given to improving the quality of singing. The choice of keys, which are determined by the commercially produced backing tracks, is not always appropriate to the pupils' young voices. There is a small tuned percussion ensemble, which performs to a good standard. The school choir has participated in a number of high-profile public performances and recordings and has done much to raise the morale of individual pupils and the wider community. However, girls are much better represented in these additional activities than are boys.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- The most effective teaching is provided by the visiting instrumental teachers. In the violin lesson, very good modelling and persistent musical dialogue, supported by reference to stave notation, helped pupils to make good progress in developing their musical understanding.
- Class teachers lead activities with confidence and explain tasks clearly. However, they do not make enough use of musical demonstration to show pupils how music works or what musical effect is intended, preferring to describe rather than model. Consequently, while pupils always complete tasks compliantly, they do not always produce work which is musically assured or fluent. This is particularly the case in the later stages of Key Stage 2.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) programmes are used to help pupils create music, although this is much less effective in Key Stage 1 because of limitations in pupils' musical understanding.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- The classroom curriculum is underpinned by a set of 'non-negotiables', which establish core expectations in music for each year group and which secure a basis for musical development as pupils progress through the school. Year teams are then permitted to develop from these their own programmes and projects, choosing repertoire to suit cross-curricular themes. Published resources are available to support and guide. Some imaginative choices have been made, for example the local 'Transporter Bridge' song that was used to help develop Year 5 pupils' understanding of metre, rhythm and melody through listening work, singing and instrumental performance. However, the quality of curriculum planning beyond the 'non-negotiables' remains only satisfactory because it is inconsistent across year groups.

- In addition to the regular extra-curricular groups, there are annual visits to musical theatre productions in local and London theatres and annual musical theatre productions in school that involve every pupil. Regular performances by visiting groups also extend pupils' understanding of different musical styles and cultures.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- The music coordinator and the specialist recorder teacher are also active musicians outside of school. Good liaison between them ensures consistency of expectations and planning, and their experience and contacts with the local music community benefit pupils greatly. Good progress has been made in establishing the 'non-negotiable' music programme throughout the school, but there is more to be done to ensure that all pupils benefit from good music provision. Self-evaluation is only satisfactory because observations have focused on instrumental and extra-curricular teaching with limited consideration of music teaching by class teachers. This has led to overgenerous self-evaluation judgements.
- While the school makes use of the 'Sing Up' online resources, there has been no involvement of staff in the continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities offered through the national singing strategy or the Key Stage 2 music CPD programme.
- It is positive that other adults contribute to the leadership of musical activities. For example, the Early Years leader runs the percussion group, assisted by a retired headteacher who provides piano accompaniment. The choir is taken by a music specialist teacher from the local secondary school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- securing the consistency of curriculum planning beyond the core 'non-negotiable' programme for each year group
- significantly increasing the numbers of boys participating in extra-curricular musical activities
- ensuring that more emphasis is given to improving the quality of singing in the 'Glee Club', and that the choice of keys is always appropriate to the pupils' voices
- providing opportunities for the music coordinator to engage with subject-specific CPD programmes for singing and for wider curriculum work, and disseminating this learning through lesson observations and training for class teachers in school.

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

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector