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Mrs E Brooks
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Brooks

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 12 July 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 you, the music coordinator and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of three class lessons, an after-school choir and a rehearsal for the school show.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- Attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6, representing satisfactory progress. Children in the Reception classes enjoy singing and performing. They readily experiment with sounds when using a music computer program. Singing is a stronger aspect of pupils' achievement across the school. Both boys and girls participate equally when singing in lessons and the choir makes a strong, well-blended sound. Occasionally, pupils' enthusiasm and keenness to sing loudly force the sound and lead to inaccuracies in pitch. Composing is a weaker area because it is not planned well. Pupils in upper Key Stage 2 have limited opportunities to create and develop musical ideas on a regular basis.

- Pupils' involvement in extra-curricular activities is broadly satisfactory although many more girls than boys take part. It is positive that all pupils in Years 3 and 4 learn an instrument for a year, free of charge, through the 'Wider Opportunities' programme. However, few sustain their lessons during the following year.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Lessons include a suitable range of practical activities. Teachers pay attention to the context and mood of music when pupils are singing and composing. They introduce key musical vocabulary relating to aspects, such as dynamics and pitch, and encourage pupils to use the correct terms when answering questions. Pupils are also taught about the importance of singing techniques, such as posture and breathing. However, developing knowledge about music sometimes receives too much emphasis in lessons, leading to the teacher doing much of the talking. This restricts opportunities for pupils to learn about music and develop their musical skills through practical activities.
- Teachers have positive and enthusiastic approaches to leading singing activities and provide good role models. This encourages pupils to participate and try their best. Teachers ensure that pupils listen carefully and replay sections of backing tracks to highlight any inaccuracies in pupils' singing. Opportunities are sometimes missed to encourage critical listening through singing unaccompanied or through teachers using their own voices to demonstrate sections that pupils find more difficult.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- The school's use of the 'Sing Up!' materials is broadening teachers' repertoire and approaches. Pupils sing regularly and vocal work is an important part of school life. The choir is popular with pupils, who become animated when talking about the opportunities that they have through performing with the choir in the school and the community. Pupils' experiences of music are also enhanced by regular opportunities to perform at large-scale events and venues, such as the Anvil and the Albert Hall. These are very much valued by pupils who recall some memorable occasions.
- The school is rightly reviewing its plans for the music curriculum together with arrangements for assessing pupils' progress. A range of resources is used to support teaching. Opportunities to use information and communication technology to support music are included in each key stage. However, a shortcoming is the lack of a clearly structured plan to support pupils' progress in the creating and developing musical ideas strand of the curriculum.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- You and the music coordinator acknowledge that music has not been a priority for the school over recent years. The overall view of music in the school is generally accurate and you have already identified that the curriculum plans require more development.
- There is a clear commitment to all pupils being involved in musical events, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities from the Keevill unit. As a result, all pupils take part in the regular year-group concerts and shows. The governing body also demonstrates its commitment to inclusion by subsidising instrumental tuition, reducing the cost to parents and supporting participation in cases of financial hardship.
- Several members of the teaching and non-teaching staff have expertise in music and make a valuable contribution to music in the school. They take the lead at concerts and special events so that putting on concerts is a shared responsibility rather than lying solely with the music coordinator. This supports the school's capacity to develop music further in the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving attainment in creating and developing musical ideas, by devising clear plans to show how this area of music will be developed progressively as pupils move through the school
- increasing the involvement of boys in extra-curricular activities, including the choir
- ensuring that pupils are involved in practical activity for the majority of each lesson and that knowledge about music is mainly taught in a practical context.

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