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25 July 2011

Mrs C Williams
Headteacher
Edward Bryant Primary School
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Dear Mrs Williams

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 14 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 and the music coordinator, and with pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of six lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- Attainment is broadly average and pupils' progress is satisfactory. When enthused by the choice of song, pupils respond very positively and their singing is of a good standard. This was evident in the Wider Opportunities lesson in Year 4 when both boys and girls participated fully and rose well to meet the teachers' high expectations. Overall, though, recordings and other observations show that standards of vocal work are average, being less secure when pupils sing songs with more than one part.
- From Reception onwards, pupils develop satisfactory musical knowledge and skills and use key vocabulary appropriately. Their achievement in creating and developing musical ideas is good in Reception, where activities are well planned, but weaker by the time pupils reach Year 6.

This area of music is not covered in a systematic way as pupils move through the school and the plans for developing composing skills are insufficiently structured.

- Participation in instrumental teaching is good overall. All pupils in Year 2 learn recorder and all in Year 4 learn guitar through the national Wider Opportunities programme. However, the number of pupils continuing with instrumental tuition, as a result of these initial experiences, is low. Pupils have limited opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Most lessons involve a balance of practical singing and performing activities. In some cases, pupils' learning is particularly successful because the planned tasks build well on each other with a good balance of composing, singing and playing instruments, as well as focused listening. In these cases, lessons are essentially musical experiences for pupils and have purposeful, musical outcomes.
- The Wider Opportunities lessons elicit positive responses from pupils and good engagement from both boys and girls. Pupils enjoy the range of well-planned activities and spend the vast majority of the lesson engaged in practical activity. In these sessions, pupils are invited to contribute to the musical decisions. They assess their own performances so that they feel part of the learning that is taking place. In some other lessons, pupils' learning and engagement falter when too long is spent on one activity or when they are given writing tasks for prolonged periods that lack purpose and do not lead to musical outcomes. Lesson content is not always sufficiently challenging for the more able musicians who have already developed their musical skills and knowledge through instrumental lessons, either through the school or privately.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- Curriculum plans include opportunities for pupils to encounter music from a satisfactory range of styles, cultures and traditions. Pupils also make some use of information and communication technology to support their learning in music in all key stages. In the Reception classes, the musical aspects of children's creative development are well planned and promoted. The school uses a range of materials to plan lessons, mainly based on a commercial scheme. However, it lacks an overview plan to show how musical skills will be developed as pupils move through the school, particularly in relation to composing.
- Pupils have limited opportunities to engage in extra-curricular activities. One weekly after-school club takes place but this changes from term to term which restricts continuity. The new orchestra, introduced several weeks ago, is a positive development, which gives instrumentalists the chance to perform and contribute to the musical life of the school.

- The school organises an appropriate range of opportunities for pupils to perform outside the school, including professional venues when pupils experience being part of a much larger ensemble, with pupils from other schools.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- You have an accurate view of the effectiveness of music in the school. The current action plan includes appropriate priorities, such as improving the extra-curricular provision and increasing take-up for instrumental tuition. The music coordinator is only in school for one day a week, which limits the opportunity to lead the subject and drive forward improvements. This has been recognised by you and governors and arrangements for music are to change from September with the appointment of two additional members of staff to support music in the school.
- The school has well-established partnerships with the local authority's music service and has been involved in the national Wider Opportunities programme for several years. You have identified that boys have not been as engaged as girls in music, in the past, and have taken steps to improve the balance. More boys are now playing instruments and the balance in the new orchestra and guitar group is reasonable. However, the school has not yet analysed the underlying reasons for so few pupils continuing to take instrumental lessons in Years 5 and 6, once the free tuition in Year 4 comes to an end.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- taking more account of the skills of the more able musicians when planning lessons to ensure that they work at the right level
- providing more opportunities for pupils to engage in extra-curricular activities over a sustained period and encouraging more pupils to continue with instrumental tuition when the Wider Opportunities teaching ends
- devising an overview plan to indicate how skills, particularly relating to composing, will be developed as pupils move from Years 1 to 6.

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