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Mr D Deane
Headteacher
St Thomas of Canterbury Primary School
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Dear Mr Deane

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 10 January 2012 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; a meeting with the head of Salford Music and Performing Arts Service (MAPAS); scrutiny of relevant documentation; evaluation of pupils' extra-curricular and instrumental music making; and observation of four class lessons, two singing sessions and an extra-curricular choir rehearsal.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- Given their starting points, pupils' musical progress is satisfactory overall. Their achievement in singing is good. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 can sing in tune confidently with a secure grasp of pitch, particularly in middle and lower registers, and by the end of Key Stage 2 they are singing increasingly varied and challenging repertoire. However, due to limited opportunities and resources for playing musical instruments and creating musical ideas, pupils' achievements in these areas are weaker.
- Participation in extra-curricular music activities and instrumental tuition is limited. The school has supported pupils' interest in ensemble performance – for example, by setting up a small band in Year 6. There is a school choir, but the involvement of boys is limited.

- During musical activities, pupils show good levels of cooperation and behaviour, and music makes a positive contribution to their overall personal and social development.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Where teaching is stronger, teachers ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to play and/or sing as a focus of the lesson. However, too often there is an over-focus on verbal direction, questioning and talking rather than giving pupils opportunities to demonstrate through music what they have understood.
- A specialist visiting teacher leads singing across the school. Through clear modelling and regular practise, pupils progress well in singing songs which focus mainly on the religious character of the school. Wider vocal repertoire is developed through classroom music linked to themes across the curriculum.
- Class teachers demonstrate singing with confidence; however, there are also weaknesses in subject knowledge, particularly in understanding how pupils should progress musically. Some misconceptions and errors in pupils' responses are not identified and consequently their progress slows.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- The cross-curricular thematic approach to curriculum planning ensures coverage of a wide range of musical styles, cultures, genres and periods. For example, pupils in Year 6 discuss the features of modern British folk music and in Year 3, pupils explore marching rhythms linked to a project on the Romans.
- While there is a strong focus on singing, aspects of playing instruments, composing and the musical use of information and communication technology (ICT) are less systematically developed as pupils move through the school. The school is aware of these inconsistencies and has introduced drumming this term.
- A minority of children in Years 5 and 6 learn the recorder with a visiting peripatetic music teacher from MAPAS. They are progressing well and are keen to continue learning a musical instrument in the future.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- The new music coordinator has a clear vision and is strongly supported by you. The school is honest and accurate in its self-evaluation and has strong processes in place for monitoring the effectiveness of provision. The correct priorities have been identified and appropriate improvement

plans are in place. However, these plans are at an early stage of implementation and any significant impact is not yet evident.

- The school works effectively with a private singing teacher who regularly teaches across the school. However, the school acknowledges its work with MAPAS has been more limited in its impact on participation in extra-curricular musical activities and in instrumental tuition.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing the curriculum to ensure musical progression across the curriculum, particularly in playing instruments and composing, including the use of ICT
- developing teachers' subject knowledge to ensure that sequences of learning build systematically on pupils' prior skills and abilities
- improving pupils' participation in extra-curricular musical activities and take-up of instrumental tuition.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop music in the school.

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy
Her Majesty's Inspector