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Mr Jason Redmond
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Redmond

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 23 February 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: discussions with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work and observation of two class lessons, small-group instrumental lessons and a Wider Opportunities whole-class lesson. A discussion was also held with the Head of Trafford Music Service.

The overall effectiveness of music is good.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is good.

- Standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 are broadly average. Composing work is generally undertaken enthusiastically, with pupils supporting each other well in group and paired work. Pupils' instrumental skills are often above average, with pupils showing good understanding of phrasing and expression. Musical discussion between pupils is a regular feature in lessons; consequently they can evaluate each other's work sensibly and provide helpful ideas for improvement. Pupils sing in assemblies and during some lessons; however improving their singing skills is generally underdeveloped. Overall, given pupils' mixed musical abilities and experiences when they start in Year 3, they make good progress.

- The pupils who are involved in the Wider Opportunities programme make good progress and this, together with their involvement in different instrumental ensembles, contributes well to their enjoyment of music. Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to perform either during concerts or assemblies.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is good.

- Instrumental group and whole-class Wider Opportunities teaching is characterised by good modelling and integration of singing and playing. Consequently, pupils learn how to relate theory and practical music together with good awareness of tone quality, rhythm and dynamics.
- Pupils and their teachers use musical and theoretical language regularly in both aural and written work. Despite this approach, some pupils struggle when using these words and symbols accurately to describe or notate their practical music making. Pupils are confident to challenge and question their teachers, and encouraged to express and justify their own musical opinions.
- All curriculum lessons are carefully assessed to provide a thorough and meaningful view of how well pupils have done and what their next steps should be. However, occasionally this information is used to give a picture of what pupils have done rather than measuring their learning. In addition, audio and/or video recordings provide a record that a piece of work has been completed rather than being used to help pupils understand how to make improvements.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- Music lessons are taught as part of units where different subjects are linked together. Although all requirements are met, leaders recognise that singing is not taught as regularly as other parts of the music curriculum. During the term, music, for some classes, is not taught regularly. Although musical skills progression is evident on paper, in practice, teachers' close adherence to the written word limits the progress made by pupils. Where teachers move away from the time constraints indicated in the music planning, progress and pupils' learning improves.
- Pupils take part in a number of different ensembles and instrumental lessons. Partnership with the local authority music service is well established and enables pupils to enjoy taking part in workshops with professional musicians and to be involved in the whole-class instrumental lessons. While pupils enjoy taking part in these, with a high proportion of pupils continuing to learn instruments, these programmes are shorter than those typically experienced as part of the Wider Opportunities initiative.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is good.

- Leaders have well-considered plans to extend the range of ensembles, instrumental lessons and whole-class instrumental work so that all groups of pupils are involved in music making. However they recognise that singing does not have the same attention as is afforded to instrumental learning. Careful analysis of the progress made by different groups of pupils has resulted in some curriculum changes, for example, the use of computers in Year 6, in order to engage more boys in music. This change is proving successful.
- The strong links with the local authority music service contribute well to leaders' good awareness of national initiatives in music education. Every opportunity is taken by leaders to enable pupils to be involved in music events out of school so they can benefit from listening to and working with professional musicians.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- using audio and/or video recordings regularly in lessons so that pupils are involved in knowing how to make improvements to their work
- ensuring that appropriate changes are made to the music curriculum so that the printed word and the activities suggested do not restrict learning and the progress made by all groups of pupils.

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

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector