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Mrs J Green
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Green

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 13 March 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; meetings with the Learning Officer of the Royal Cornwall Museum and the Development Manager from Cornwall Music; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of five class lessons, a small group drum lesson and a large group violin lesson.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- Musical attainment is broadly average at the end of Year 6. It is not better because of inconsistencies in the breadth of pupils' musical experiences. Singing and instrumental performance are stronger than creative work or understanding of different musical styles and traditions. Given that children's prior musical experience and development when they join the school are also broadly average, progress is satisfactory.
- Overall, the proportion of pupils participating in additional instrumental tuition and regular extra-curricular activities in music is good. All groups are represented, although significantly more girls than boys participate in the school choir.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- As with achievement, the quality of teaching is inconsistent. Some good teaching is in place. The choir is led well by a teaching assistant, with a parent giving good support with piano accompaniment. Singing in the choir rehearsals and school assemblies is modelled well, including good attention to diction and intonation. Good teaching was seen in the drum lesson and in the Year 5 and 6 class, where confident modelling and only essential use of verbal explanation helped pupils to make good musical progress.
- Other teaching is not as effective for two reasons. First, too many lessons are not clear in their musical learning intentions. For example, in a lesson about song writing, much more emphasis was placed on the literacy elements of lyric writing and much less consideration was given to musical considerations such as metre, rhythm and phrasing. The second reason is that teaching plans to cover too many areas of musical skills, knowledge, and understanding at once, in too short a time, or without sufficient joining up. As a consequence, pupils do not make better than satisfactory progress in any of these areas. This was the case in classroom lessons and in the violin tuition observed.
- Teachers are starting to make more detailed assessments of pupils' work. However, assessment is underdeveloped and little use is made of recording, except for major performance events.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- Music in the curriculum is planned through cross-curricular projects. While adequate consideration is taken of the musical ideas and activities to be covered in each topic, across the school very limited planning of how pupils' musical understanding should progress as they move from Year 1 to Year 6 takes place.
- Planned coverage of different musical styles and traditions is adequate, but much more is required if pupils are to acquire a good understanding of other musical cultures. Similarly, not enough is made of the rich local Cornish cultural folk music and dance heritage.
- The school makes every effort to engage with local musicians and partner organisations in order to provide pupils with musical experiences that, within a small school, they might otherwise enjoy. This includes choral festivals with the local secondary school which are much enjoyed by pupils, and a multi-arts project with the Royal Cornwall Museum which is now in its third year. Good numbers participate in additional drum tuition, provided by a private tutor, and in violin lessons provided by Music Cornwall. However, these activities do not negate weaknesses in the classroom curriculum, so that overall the curriculum in music remains only satisfactory.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- Self-evaluation of music provision is accurate and correctly identifies the school's strengths and weaknesses. Our dialogue during the inspection revealed good understanding about key issues in music education, gained through study of inspection guidance and the recent Ofsted music subject report.
- Additional opportunities and partnerships are well organised, but managed less well. Not enough challenge is given to external partners about the quality of partnership working, or about how these additional programmes and projects tie in to pupils' overall interests, abilities and progress. Coupled with limitations in the long-term vision for the classroom curriculum, defining and monitoring pupils' overall musical progression as they move through the school is a key area for improvement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- by September 2012, reviewing the whole-school plan for music in curriculum class lessons and ensure a clear expectation about how pupils will progress in music as they move through Key Stages 1 and 2
- in partnership with Music Cornwall, ensuring that all music lessons have an immediate and dominant focus on musical sound, with clear and focussed musical learning intentions
- in partnership with Music Cornwall, and other visiting teachers and providers, ensuring that additional instrumental tuition and other activities are planned and evaluated in the contexts of the classroom music curriculum and individual pupils' musical interests and abilities.

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

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector