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Mrs M Whitworth
Headteacher
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Whitworth

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 1 May 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, pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body; a meeting with the head of Calderdale Music Service; scrutiny of relevant documentation; and observation of four class lessons, a whole school singing session and an extra-curricular choir rehearsal.

The overall effectiveness of music is inadequate.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is inadequate.

- Given their starting points, pupils' musical progress is inadequate. Although achievement in singing is stronger for pupils in the choir, pupils' singing overall lacks security in pitching, particularly in the middle and higher registers. Achievements in playing musical instruments and creating musical ideas are not developed consistently across the school. As a result, significant weaknesses exist in pupils' grasp of rhythm and pitch.
- Boys form nearly half of the well-supported school choir. However, take-up of instrumental tuition is limited and no other extra-curricular music activities are in place. Although some parents have expressed interest, and the school is looking at providing further tuition through partnership with

Calderdale Music Service, currently, only one pupil receives instrumental lessons in school.

- During musical activities, pupils show good levels of cooperation and attentive behaviour, although in whole-school singing sessions the needs of the youngest pupils are not met effectively and consequently their progress is more limited. Music makes a positive contribution to pupils' overall personal and social development and the religious life of the school.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is inadequate.

- The school acknowledges significant weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge, particularly in understanding how pupils should progress musically. Consequently, sequences of learning do not build systematically on pupils' prior skills and abilities. This inhibits pupils' achievement.
- Assessment is not used effectively to improve pupils' work. As a result, teachers do not have a secure understanding of pupils' musical development and activities are not well matched to pupils' different needs and abilities. Misconceptions and errors in pupils' responses are not identified and also this prevents their musical progress.
- Despite opportunities to play and/or sing in most lessons, verbal direction is over-used. Spoken questioning and explaining predominate, rather than music-making and giving pupils opportunities to demonstrate what they have understood through musical sound. This is because teachers lack confidence to demonstrate their expectations musically, for example by singing with accurate pitch. This further impedes pupils' progress.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is inadequate.

- The school has developed a cross-curricular thematic approach to curriculum. However, it has not developed a scheme of work that ensures musical progression as pupils move through the school. As a result, teachers' planning does not consider the systematic development of pupils' musical skills and knowledge. Despite variety in the themes chosen, the curriculum does not ensure coverage of a wide range of musical styles, cultures, genres and periods.
- Singing is supported through whole-school hymn practice and singing sessions which predominantly reflect the religious character of the school. In lessons, little development of singing takes place beyond singing songs related to the chosen topic. Similarly, aspects of playing instruments, composing and the musical use of information and communication technology (ICT) are not systematically developed as pupils move through the school.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is inadequate.

- Currently, music does not have subject leadership. Senior leaders do not have a secure view of the provision, quality and standards of achievement in music. You are aware that weaknesses in curriculum progression are matched by insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn a musical instrument. You have also recognised the need for professional development for teaching staff. However, these weaknesses are not identified in the schools' current development planning.
- Insufficient attention has been given to standards and provision in music. Given the lack of specialist knowledge within the school, not enough has been done to work in partnership with the local music service to secure the necessary training for teachers and enable pupils to make better progress and achieve better outcomes in music.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the quality of teaching and ensuring that pupils make better progress by:
 - working in partnership with Calderdale Music Service to provide effective training for teachers to develop their confidence and subject knowledge and understanding of progression in music
 - making more effective use of assessments to plan musical activities that meet pupils' differing needs and abilities
- improving the quality of curriculum planning to ensure that:
 - the development of pupils' musical skills and knowledge is planned systematically as they move through the school
 - in partnership with Calderdale Music Service, opportunities for singing, playing musical instruments and composing are carefully developed and build on pupils' prior skills and abilities
 - an appropriately wide range of musical styles, cultures, genres and periods are covered in the music curriculum
- improving subject leadership by:
 - appointing a subject leader to drive improvement in music
 - ensuring rigorous scrutiny and oversight of the quality of teaching, music provision and the attainment and progress 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

Adrian Guy
Her Majesty's Inspector