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17 May 2012

Mrs E Fitch
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Fitch

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 2 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: discussions with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation, and observation of seven lessons, a singing assembly and individual instrumental tuition.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- Standards are below average. Despite variability within year groups which leads to some having gaps in their learning, pupils make broadly satisfactory progress by the end of Year 6. Pupils make strongest progress in developing pupils' rhythmic skills. By the end of Year 6, many pupils can perform different rhythmic patterns accurately, although they lack confidence in knowing how to develop these further. Similarly, pupils have experience of creating musical ideas but lack understanding about how to structure these into longer pieces.
- Pupils enjoy singing a range of simple songs and show confidence, in Key Stage 2, when singing unaccompanied songs and rounds. However, their quality of vocal intonation and dynamic range is underdeveloped.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy taking part in a mixture of musical games and singing and are able to discuss differences between instruments.
- The proportion of pupils receiving individual instrumental tuition is low and no opportunities are provided for pupils to make music together out of lesson time. However, opportunities are provided for pupils to perform, through one-off musical events and strong links with the local church.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Where teaching is stronger, expectations are high, pupils with different abilities are challenged, and singing is integrated well with creative work. Opportunities are provided for musical discussion and for pupils to reflect and make changes to their work as the lesson progresses.
- Many teachers demonstrate a keen interest in teaching music. Their developing expertise is apparent in the way lessons engage and enthuse pupils. However there remain weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge; pupils' misconceptions and errors are not identified and this limits progress in lessons. Despite some helpful modelling by teachers, pupils are not always able to demonstrate through music what they have understood as verbal explanations are too often sought. Audio recordings of pupils' work are made but they are not used in some lessons for pupils to evaluate and improve their work.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- A commercial music scheme is used in most year groups to ensure that pupils experience singing, performing and creating music. This gives a consistent approach to lesson planning. However leaders are aware that information and communication technology (ICT) is not systematically developed in music lessons. In addition, the development of pupils' musical skills from Year 1 to Year 6 is limited due to inconsistencies in the way lessons are taught and repertoire is chosen, throughout the school.
- The additional whole-class recorder lessons for many pupils in Key Stage 2 provide a helpful supplement to the music curriculum. All classes in Year 6 are taught by subject-specialist teachers and leaders arrange for additional workshops introduce pupils to different musical cultures and traditions. Although pupils sing regularly for school events and festivals, no whole-school choral group exists.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- Leaders have worked hard since the infant and junior schools were amalgamated at the start of this academic year to ensure consistency in planning music lessons, throughout and within year groups. The subject leader undertakes regular monitoring of planning and lesson observations. However, the current action plan only reports what actions have been taken to date and leaders recognise the need to use this information to evaluate provision and set clear timescales and targets for pupils' further participation and musical progress.
- It is clear that leaders appreciate the importance of music within the school; they also recognise that developments are needed so that all pupils have equality of opportunity during their lessons and additional music activities. Although all groups are represented, leaders understand the need to involve more pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the quality of music teaching by:
 - sharing the good practice evident within the school
 - using the information about pupils' musical abilities so that lessons are well matched to their individual needs and that teachers' expectations of pupils' capabilities are raised
 - enabling pupils to demonstrate their musical understanding
 - expecting pupils to listen to their work so they can identify how to make improvements
- reviewing the music curriculum to ensure that:
 - there is consistency across the school and that teachers in each year group are clear how the music work they lead links to previous and later years
 - ICT is included
 - the number of music ensembles that meet regularly is increased so that more pupils can be involved in music making
- improving the quality of leadership and management of music further by:
 - refining the action plan to include clear, appropriate and measurable targets so that outcomes for all pupils can be clearly measured.

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