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Mr M Wilson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Wilson

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 3 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 and pupils; a meeting with the head of ArtForms; scrutiny of relevant documentation; and observation of two class lessons and an instrumental lesson, 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 make satisfactory progress. However, pupils' creativity and musical choices are less well supported by the weaker development of other skills such as singing with accurate intonation and secure grasp of steady beat and rhythmic patterns.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with expectations. Pupils' compositional work is strong, due to the innovative use of information and communications technology (ICT) but, equally, weaknesses exist – most noticeably in singing, particularly for boys. Key Stage 2 pupils learn the recorder, and by Year 6 most have learned to play an appropriate range of notes, although pupils' control of dynamics and tone is more limited. Stronger development of singing takes place in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of good modelling by the class

teacher. However, children's acquisition of other musical skills is less consistently developed.

- Music makes a positive contribution to the ethos of the school, successfully supporting pupils' personal and social development which is evident in their behaviour and positive attributes and attitudes. The school choir sing with great enthusiasm; however, you are aware that few boys chose to join in. The proportion of pupils who receive additional instrumental tuition is slightly lower than might be expected.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- In lessons, teachers often use examples from current popular music and links to other topics to engage pupils' interest. Although teachers are able to model their expectations musically, too often they rely on verbal explanations, questioning and responses. As a result, pupils' understanding of what successful outcomes sound like are less secure and their progress slows.
- Teachers plan lessons with musical objectives which are regularly referred to during the lessons and help learning to proceed at a brisk pace. ICT is regularly used to record pupils' work as well as to control and manipulate sounds. However, teachers' use of assessment strategies to adjust learning for different groups of pupils is limited and has been identified as an area for further development.
- In singing sessions, teachers work hard to generate enthusiasm and engagement. However, the quality of singing and opportunities to rehearse and improve the accuracy of intonation and other musical elements receive a limited focus. Consequently, pupils' progress in singing is hampered.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is good.

- The comprehensive curriculum plan tracks the progression of musical elements across a two-year cycle. Aspects of instrumental work are developed through a framework for assessing pupils' progress in learning the recorder. Particular emphasis is placed on: developing elements of music with the adapted use of a published-music scheme, the use of ICT to manipulate sounds, and popular music linked to units of learning. However, leaders are aware that further refining is needed in the development of the skills of pitch and rhythm.
- A good proportion of time is dedicated to creative activities in the curriculum. Coverage of National Curriculum requirements is carefully threaded through cross-curricular plans, ensuring a wide range of musical experiences from different cultures and musical styles.
- The school choir has had some success in increasing the participation of boys by linking this with the preparation for a school production on a

pirate theme. However, you recognise that more work is needed to encourage the equal participation of boys.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is good.

- You and your subject leaders share a drive and well-articulated ambition for music within the school. You are well aware of strengths and areas for development in the subject and these are appropriately planned for. Improvements to the curriculum, particularly in using ICT to manipulate musical sounds, are evident in pupils' progress in these areas.
- Leaders have grasped the importance of ensuring that teachers use music to demonstrate and model expectations musically, and are aware of what they need to do to develop teaching and learning further.
- The partnership with ArtForms to provide instrumental tuition on guitar and keyboard is carefully monitored. You are aware that further development of partnership work is needed to ensure that teachers develop their confidence in modeling and singing to raise standards in music.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving pupils' progress and raising standards in singing by:
 - increasing the participation of boys in singing activities
 - ensuring that pupils regularly receive and act upon feedback about how they can improve their singing
- developing the skills of teachers to model their expectations musically by:
 - accessing training to enable staff to further develop their confidence in singing and demonstrating to pupils in lessons
 - further refining curriculum plans to clarify progression in singing and rhythmic skills.

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