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29 June 2012

Mrs B Swain
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Swain

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 23 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 Principal of Havering Music School; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; visits to two music assemblies and a choir rehearsal; and observation of six class lessons and two small-group violin lessons.

The overall effectiveness of music is inadequate.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is inadequate.

- Given pupils' aptitudes and attitudes when they start school, their progress in music is inadequate. Standards at the end of Year 6 are low. The creative tasks being undertaken by these pupils and the quality of their responses are typically what should be seen at the start, rather than the end, of Key Stage 2. Their melodic and rhythmic understanding is underdeveloped, as is their skill in playing classroom instruments.
- Singing is enthusiastic in the younger year groups but, again, vocal work is not at the standard expected at the end of Key Stage 2. Part-singing is rare and, apart from the choir members, older pupils are noticeably unenthusiastic about taking part in vocal work.

- Around one in every ten pupils benefits from additional instrumental tuition in school. A similar number receive tuition privately, out of school. However, the school does not offer any extra-curricular instrumental ensembles. Furthermore, these pupils do not make sufficient use of their additional skills and knowledge in class lessons. The choir is attended loyally by around 30 pupils, the overwhelming majority being girls.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is inadequate.

- Class teachers plan lessons thoroughly and with a professional attitude. However, the generic teaching strategies used, which may be appropriate in other areas of the curriculum, inhibit musical learning. For example, too much time is spent at the start of the lesson sharing the learning objectives verbally with pupils, followed by paired 'partner-talk' activities where pupils discuss their understanding of key terms and phrases that had also been explained verbally by the teacher. The consequence of this approach is that too little time is given to pupils' active engagement with musical sounds. When pupils are engaged in practical music-making – which they much enjoy – activities are not sustained because they are cut short by further discussion and verbal explanation by the teacher. As a result, the quality of pupils' musical understanding is superficial.
- Video cameras have been used very recently in Year 6 to record and appraise pupils' work. However, no audio recordings are made regularly in class lessons, and no use is made of information and communication technology to create or manipulate musical sounds.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is inadequate.

- Sufficient curriculum time is given to music; every class has a weekly music lesson and each key stage has weekly singing practice. The taught curriculum is based around a published scheme of work, although this is not always adapted or used appropriately by class teachers. Resources produced by 'Sing Up' support whole-school singing work although, again, these are not used to their best effect because singing leaders talk too much and do not model enough.
- Equipment for class music is inadequate. The classroom instruments offered to older pupils are not different enough to those used with younger classes. In particular, tuned percussion instruments are insufficiently varied and of poor quality. Resources for using information and communication technology in musical learning are inadequate.
- At present, the school does not participate in the Wider Opportunities programme. Of the 43 current Year 6 pupils that took part in the whole-class brass programme when they were in Year 4, just one has continued with tuition. Additional instrumental tuition is available on violin, guitar and clarinet.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- In recent years, priority has been given to raising standards in English and mathematics in order to bring the school out of a category of concern. You have recognised that improvements are required in music provision, and prior to this inspection you had made arrangements to reengage with the Wider Opportunities programme in September 2012. Your self-evaluation, including the joint lesson observation that we undertook, was broadly accurate and correctly identified the need for a programme of continuing professional development in music across the school. While the school has a satisfactory partnership arrangement with the Havering Music School to provide instrumental tuition, more should be made of this partnership to support instrumental ensemble work and improve the quality of class teaching. The new music hub arrangements and funding, from September 2012, offer a good opportunity to develop this.
- The music coordinator is up-to-date with current developments in music education. The school has analysed participation in additional music activities and, while acknowledging it could be higher, has taken steps to include pupils whose family circumstances might otherwise prevent them taking part. This includes using the 'My Time' fund to pay for holiday workshops that could lead to regular, subsidised instrumental tuition.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that class music lessons have a prime focus on learning through pupils' engagement with musical sound, with words supporting rather than driving musical teaching and learning
- improving the equipment available for class music lessons, particularly instruments for older pupils, and information and communication technology
- working in partnership with the new Havering Music Hub to
 - provide continuing professional development that improves significantly the music quality of class teaching and learning
 - develop opportunities for extra-curricular instrumental ensemble playing.

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