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Mr M Fletcher
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Fletcher

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 14 June 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 discussions with pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; a meeting with the head of Gloucestershire Music Service; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of seven class lessons, a piano lesson, a singing assembly and a whole-class singing session.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly in line with expectations. Most pupils sing enthusiastically and enjoy creating musical ideas. Regular opportunities are provided to play musical instruments in class although the range of these instruments is limited, particularly for older pupils. Consequently, aspects of pupils' melodic and rhythmic understanding are underdeveloped. Given pupils' prior experiences, interest and dispositions when they start school, this represents satisfactory progress.
- The numbers of pupils receiving additional instrumental tuition and/or participating in regular extra-curricular music activities are satisfactory. They are not better because some groups, including boys and those in

receipt of free school meals, are significantly more underrepresented than is typically the case.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Teachers plan lessons diligently and prepare resources well. They manage their classrooms effectively, and pupils respond by showing good behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning. However, with lessons planned to a cross-curricular approach, too much learning is predicated on non-musical activities. In too many instances, pupils are required to plan their work through writing and drawing rather than through experiencing and experimenting with musical sounds. Pupils are given regular opportunities to make music, but only enough to enable their satisfactory progress. This is accompanied by a dominance of teacher-talk. Staff are able musicians, but do not use these skills sufficiently to model what is expected.
- The emerging good assessment practice is in place in Key Stage 1, but this is not yet developed in Key Stage 2. Audio recordings of pupils' work are made irregularly, and little use is made of information and communication technology for music-making.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- Cross-curricular projects are planned in commendable detail but the quality of musical learning intentions is only just satisfactory. This is because planning is concerned with teaching activity, rather than expectations for pupils' learning. Over time, the planned curriculum provides limited guidance about the musical standards that pupils are expected to reach at different stages.
- Opportunities exist for pupils from different year groups to sing together in the Glee Club; this is enjoyed greatly, although the great majority are girls and the vocal quality of performance is only satisfactory. The African drumming workshop provided as part of the recent Arts Week, and extending into additional workshops this term, proved very popular. Recorder groups provide instrumental ensemble experiences, but no groups exist for pupils who play other instruments.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- Your self-evaluation is very good. Prior to the inspection, you had correctly identified the key areas for improvement; in our joint lesson observations during the day you correctly identified the causes of pupils' satisfactory achievement and the features that made teaching in music no better than satisfactory. Good use was made of the Ofsted subject-specific criteria in coming to these judgements.

- Despite this, however, leadership by the subject coordinator is limited. Insufficient consideration is given to the overall vision for pupils' musical progress as they move through the school, with the consequence that they make only satisfactory progress.
- A particularly interesting development is the initiative of older pupils in leading younger children in playground singing games, using resources from Sing Up. The young leaders show great confidence through this work, which is doing much to boost the enjoyment and involvement of infant pupils in vocal work.
- The school stopped the local authority 'Wider Opportunities' programme two years ago, with very few pupils continuing after the initial ten-week experience. Plans are in place to start this again in September 2012, but again the programme is only planned to last for ten weeks. The school provides space for two self-employed peripatetic teachers to provide individual tuition; one of these also provides whole-class singing work, funded through the Cathedral Outreach Project scheme. Appropriate procedures are in place to check and vet these teachers. However, while this teaching is at least satisfactory, no regular quality-assurance mechanisms are in place.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that curriculum plans have an unequivocal focus on the musical standards that should be expected for pupils at different stages in their time at the school
- ensuring that, in all class lessons, teachers set and model high expectations for the quality of pupils' musical responses and that the tasks set are fundamentally musical, rather than dominated by non-musical activities such as writing and drawing
- increasing the proportion of pupils benefiting from regular additional instrumental tuition, and participating regularly in extra-curricular musical activities – particularly boys and pupils in receipt of free school meals
- more regular monitoring of teaching in music, both through class lessons and additional instrument tuition.

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