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Mr J Daines
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Daines

Ofsted 2012–13 good practice survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit with Daniel Burton HMI on 13 June 2012 to look at work in music and particularly the impact of your partnership work with Drake Music.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting, including the forthcoming report on music education partnerships, commissioned as part of the National Plan for Music Education. 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; meetings with an associate from Drake Music; and observation of three lessons.

Features of good practice

- Key to the success of working with Drake Music has been the sustained, long-term commitment of both the school and the music professionals to the partnership. The project has evolved over seven years, starting with exploratory work fully funded by Drake Music, to deeper, planned schemes of work that have been funded very well by the school.
- It is significant that the partnership has brought benefits for staff at the school and Drake Music staff. Both sets of colleagues report that their professional knowledge and understanding has deepened through the project, and this was seen very clearly in the way that your music co-ordinator, the Drake Music associate, and your teaching assistants worked together in one of the lessons observed.

- Excellent use of music technology helps students with severe physical difficulties to participate in music and to make choices about their performances. Technology helps them to participate in age-appropriate repertoire. Their sense of joy when participating in rap was palpable, and ensures that all are able to take a meaningful role in group performance – for example, in a class arrangement of the Jessie J song ‘Domino’.
- The school has been instrumental in helping Drake Music to developing the ‘Introduction to Music’ course, accredited by the Open College Network. The course was piloted by a student at St Rose’s, and is now being followed by a larger group of students.
- The success of the partnership work means that the school’s staff are now confident to deliver much of the work by themselves, with Drake Music associates taking a more consultative role. The confidence of students is boosted immensely by this work, as shown by the excellent dialogue during the student panel and the presentation given by one of your students to post-graduates at the University of Bristol.
- The manner with which the music professionals and school staff work with the students is good, giving them guidance and autonomy as appropriate. However, occasionally too long is spent explaining or talking about tasks, when it would be better to engage students more quickly in music-making.
- You rightly recognise that, notwithstanding the ‘Introduction to Music’ course, assessment of students’ progress in music requires development. You have started to explore the use of the ‘Sounds of Intent’ framework in this regard and plan to make contact with other schools that have taken this approach.

Areas for further development, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that spoken instructions in lessons are kept to a minimum, and that students’ immersion in musical sound is the overriding priority
- continuing to explore ways to more effectively assess students’ early progress in music, including through building links with other institutions and organisations.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop music in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty’s Inspector