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Mrs A Whitney
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Whitney

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 Tuesday 3 July 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, pupils, and parent-governors; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of audio and video recordings of pupils' work, together with observation of three class music lessons, three small-group instrumental lessons, rehearsals of the school choir and band and a singing assembly for all pupils.

The overall effectiveness of music is good.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is good.

- A significant number of children start school with musical, social and communication experiences and skills well below age-related expectations. Overall standards at the end of Key Stage Two are in line with expectations, representing good progress. They make excellent progress in vocal work; part-singing is confident, tuneful and with good diction throughout the school. Children of all ages show a good understanding of musical phrase when singing. Boys sing heartily and with much enjoyment, including in Years 5 and 6.
- All pupils are given good opportunities to learn to play instruments throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. A high proportion benefits from additional small-group tuition. The school's commitment to ensuring that all groups

of pupils are included is outstanding. Significant funding and equally large amounts of time and effort are given to liaison with parents and carers, so that no pupil slips through the net on account of their ability to pay. Similarly, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are also encouraged and included well.

- Two issues prevent achievement being judged outstanding. First, while pupils' responses show good levels of musicality, some have developed poor instrumental techniques – for example, holding the violin and/or bow at the incorrect angle, or using puffed-out cheeks, rather than the diaphragm, to control the breath when playing a wind instrument. Second, while pupils enjoy improvising short ideas, they have limited experience of creating music on a larger scale.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is good.

- The music coordinator and the visiting music specialist who, between them, teach most of the class lessons and instrumental tuition, are excellent musicians. They are strong musical role models; through their examples, pupils know exactly what they are expected to achieve. Regular recordings are made of pupils' work and these are used very well to evidence progress and exemplify standards. Written lesson planning is not detailed, but it is clear from observation that teachers have good knowledge of individual abilities and plan work accordingly.
- Instrumental lessons, including the Wider Opportunities violin classes provided through Cornwall Music, are taught with authority and good subject knowledge. However, important technique inaccuracies by pupils are sometimes left unchallenged. Over time, this leads to their developing bad habits that might be difficult to undo at an older age. This is a key reason why teaching is good, rather than outstanding.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is good.

- Pupils are offered many good opportunities to develop their music-making, including weekly class lessons, singing practices, and the choir and band. Between them, these curriculum and extra-curricular activities provide a wealth of musical styles and traditions for pupils to explore and enjoy. While every effort is made to seek out and promote these opportunities, more consideration could be given to how they combine to complement each other as part of an overall vision for pupils' music progression.
- The dedicated music room is very well equipped and kept in very good order. The school has built up an extensive range of classroom and orchestral instruments, together with very good quality equipment for making and playing audio recordings. However, pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT) for creating and manipulating musical sounds is limited. This, together with more limited opportunities

for pupils to create their own extended compositions, is why the curriculum is good rather than outstanding.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is good.

- Partnership working is outstanding. The school works closely with Humphry Davy School and the Musical Bridges initiative to ease pupils' transition to Year 7 through music work; other partnerships include with Cornwall Music to provide whole-class violin teaching, and with professional ensembles such as Duchy Opera. These partnerships are coordinated and monitored well, by both the music coordinator and yourself.
- Although you have an excellent working relationship with the visiting music teachers, formal observation and evaluation of additional instrumental tuition has been limited, so issues such as uncorrected poor technique have not been tackled sufficiently. Similarly, while much has been done to provide pupils with a broad range of musical experiences and traditions, formal planning to capture how pupils' musical skills are expected to progress as they move through the school, and to ensure good opportunities for pupils to compose their own music, requires improvement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing a clearer overview of the musical skills and understanding that pupils are expected to achieve at key points during their time at school, in order to better plan and coordinate curriculum and extra-curricular music activities
- more effectively monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in instrumental lessons, paying particular attention to the development of pupils' correct technique skills
- making more extensive use of ICT to develop pupils' musical understanding, particularly in Years 5 and 6, and providing more opportunities for pupils to create their own extended compositions.

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