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Mrs Wendy Grime
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Dear Mrs Grime

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 28 and 29 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: discussions with staff and pupils; meetings with the Head of Performing Arts from a local secondary school and the Head of Sefton Music Service; scrutiny of relevant documentation; evaluation of pupils' extra-curricular and group instrumental lessons; and observation of five class lessons.

The overall effectiveness of music is inadequate.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is inadequate.

- By the end of Year 6, pupils have made inadequate progress and have significant gaps in the development of their musical skills. Their melodic, composing and singing skills are particularly under-developed. Consequently, standards are low. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to participate in music activities but show little awareness of different musical styles and understanding of music terms.
- The quality of singing is below expectations. Some pupils sing with enthusiasm, but overall they lack awareness of pitch and good intonation.
- The proportion of pupils participating regularly in music ensembles, out of lesson time, or who have individual instrumental lessons, is low. More girls participate than boys. The school partly compensates for this situation by involving pupils, whenever possible, in additional workshops and projects

with a range of partners. Pupils who have taken part in these events report their pride and excitement when performing in large venues, for example Liverpool Cathedral.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is inadequate.

- Class teachers do not plan lessons effectively because they do not consider how pupils should progress musically. Tasks are often aimed at the whole class, so that those with different musical abilities, especially the more able, are not challenged sufficiently. Gaps in some teachers' subject knowledge are also a barrier to pupils' progress. Even during lessons where teachers are confident in leading musical activities, pupils have limited opportunities to demonstrate their musical understanding during practical work.
- The strongest teaching, for pupils receiving whole-class djembe lessons, engages pupils through clear modelling, regular practice and revisiting skills regularly. In a Year 5 'Wider Opportunities' lesson, pupils improved their ability to play rhythms accurately because they were taught to internalise rhythmic patterns by using particular mnemonics; questioning was regular, enjoyment was evident and good progress was made. However, these features are not evident in other lessons, and consequently progress is uneven.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is inadequate.

- Currently, curriculum lessons are linked to cross-curricular themes which apply to different subject areas. Music lessons are timetabled infrequently and this, together with a lack of clear planning, means that there is little sense as to how pupils' musical skills are to be developed as they move from Years 1 to 6. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy having regular music lessons and have also enjoyed taking part in the whole-class djembe lessons this term. However, this frequency of music provision is not seen for other classes.
- The recorder groups and the newly formed band provide regular extra-curricular musical activities. Although pupils sing in whole-school events, festivals and weekly assemblies, no regular whole-school choral group is in place.
- This year, leaders have extended the 'Wider Opportunities' whole-class lessons to include all pupils from Reception to Year 5. Each class receives lessons for one term. Although these lessons are popular with staff and pupils, insufficient consideration has been given about how they will coordinate with and complement other music class lessons.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is inadequate.

- Leaders are aware of the weaknesses in curriculum planning, the quality of some teaching and the progress pupils make as they move through the school. In addition, leaders are actively looking for meaningful ways to record the progress pupils make in all musical aspects during lessons.
- Partnerships with the local secondary school and the music service are developed well so that additional music projects and workshops can be provided for some groups of pupils. However, you do recognise that ensuring that all pupils develop their musical skills systematically is a key priority.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- designing a music curriculum so that it:
 - ensures consistency in developing pupils’ musical skills, particularly singing and composition, during each year group and as pupils move through the school
 - contains sufficient detail about how pupils’ progress is to be recorded
 - ensures that music lessons are taught regularly and that they include all musical aspects
 - indicates appropriate links with the additional workshops and projects currently provided
- improving the quality of music teaching by:
 - ensuring that class lessons include sufficient challenge for different ability groups, particularly those who are more able
 - using musical modelling and demonstration regularly by staff and pupils in order to promote high musical standards
 - making sure that the strong practice apparent in the best lessons is shared widely
- taking opportunities to work with external organisations and partners, including ‘Wider Opportunities’ teachers, to enable staff to develop confidence and subject knowledge, especially when teaching singing and composition.

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

Marianne Young
Her Majesty’s Inspector