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Mrs C Bennett  
Headteacher  
St Maxentius CofE Primary school  
New Heys Way  
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Bolton  
BL2 4AE

Dear Mrs Bennett

### **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 30 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; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of four class lessons, extra-curricular ensembles and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of music is good.

### **Achievement in music**

Achievement in music is good.

- Pupils look forward to their music lessons. This is because they are actively involved in, and talking about, music. Singing is a normal part of lessons and pupils learning instruments use them regularly in class lessons, playing with rhythmic precision and confidence. Standards are above average and overall, pupils make good progress.
- Pupils sing well, with attention to phrasing and intonation. By the end of Key Stage 2 they sing a varied and challenging repertoire. Occasionally the quality of their singing is restricted because pupils do not always listen to each other so that they can blend the different parts of their song together successfully.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage confidently explore instruments and sing with appropriate accuracy and enjoyment. They are

able to play instruments successfully, but when asked to combine this with singing, for some, progress is restricted.

- Almost one third of pupils are involved regularly in extra-curricular ensembles and instrumental lessons. However, twice as many girls compared to boys are involved and virtually no pupils from other groups are represented. Frequent opportunities for pupils to perform are provided both as part of assemblies and at other local venues.

### **Quality of teaching in music**

The quality of teaching in music is good.

- Enthusiastic teaching and promotion of high standards are key characteristics that enable pupils to make progress in class lessons. Appropriate pace and clear musical purpose are also evident in most lessons. Through regular modelling and encouraging pupils to work together sensibly, they are able to make judicious musical decisions in order to improve their work. However, occasionally a lack of clarity when teaching a musical element, for example, duration, limits progress.
- Strong working relationships are evident in class lessons. Teachers organise lessons, as was evident in a lesson for Year 4 pupils, well. Pupils are enabled to use their own instruments as part of group composing work.
- Audio recordings are made of pupils' completed work. You recognise that recording more frequently would enable pupils to hear how well they are doing. Currently, although pupils have positive attitudes, they struggle to identify exactly how they can improve.

### **Quality of the curriculum in music**

The quality of the curriculum in music is good.

- The curriculum has been considered well so that pupils' musical skills are developed systematically as they move through the school. Appropriate links are made with the current class topic when possible. While a strong focus is placed on singing, composition and playing instruments in each year group, leaders are aware that the musical use of information and communication technology (ICT) is underdeveloped. Investigation of appropriate software is being undertaken.
- Many pupils are competent instrumentalists. They welcome the additional music activities where they can perform and also the links with the local church particularly, that are a regular feature of school life. The number of pupils who are in the school orchestra is increasing but not all groups are represented. Leaders agree with pupils' views that storage of instruments, is on occasions, a problem.

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management in music**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is good.

- Music is a popular subject in the school. The subject leader, strongly supported by senior leaders, leads by example, providing helpful support for staff, displaying passion and commitment. In this work, she is strongly supported by senior leaders. A well-considered plan for how to improve provision further is in place and these areas were confirmed during the inspection.
- Monitoring of provision is undertaken regularly and progress made by pupils logged diligently. The current assessment system is being simplified to give more clarity to judging individual pupils' strengths and how they can make further improvements.
- The school is not involved in the 'Wider Opportunities' initiative and has limited musical links with secondary schools. However, it has forged successful partnerships with the local church and the community.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- integrating ICT into the curriculum so that pupils can work with electronic sound sources, as well as traditional instruments, when composing
- improving the participation of those groups of pupils that are currently under-represented in extra-curricular musical activities and instrumental tuition
- simplifying the current assessment system so that pupils understand clearly how to make improvements to their work.

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**