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Dr Mark Fenton  
Headteacher  
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Dear Dr Fenton

### Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 10 and 11 October 2006. At the end of the inspection I fed back my judgements and this letter is to confirm my findings.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the extent to which every pupil is benefiting from your music provision. It also explored the links you have developed with other schools and agencies, such as the local Music Service.

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 unless to highlight exceptional practice. In such circumstances the school would be contacted prior to publication to agree the exact wording. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with members of staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of five lessons and two extra curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of music is good and there is excellent capacity to improve.

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good overall.

- Pupils in Key Stage 3 demonstrated good use of musical vocabulary and enjoyed their music lessons. Students in the sixth form quickly assimilated

and developed strategies for answering examination questions. Pupils and students make good progress and achieve well throughout the school.

- The numbers studying music in Key Stage 4 and post-16 are increasing and there is good involvement in extra curricular activities and instrumental lessons. The proportion of pupils having instrumental lessons in Year 7 increased significantly this year to just over half the pupils. Extra-curricular activities provide excellent opportunity for pupils' social development and they achieve good standards of performance.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of the provision is good.

- Particular areas of strength in teaching and learning include the excellent working relationships between staff and pupils and the thoroughly planned work. Teachers give very clear instructions which enable pupils to make good progress. However, a relatively high proportion of didactic teaching reduced the time available for pupils to explore their own ideas. ICT equipment is used very effectively to reinforce learning.
- Good systems have been developed for collecting data on pupils' attainment and the school is now exploring ways to give pupils more information about what they need to do to improve their work.

### Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

The overall quality of the curriculum and extra-curricular provision is good.

- The breadth of the curriculum in the sixth form has been increased well through the introduction of the music technology courses. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities including jazz, samba and swing band. Pupils enjoy the Key Stage 3 curriculum but want more opportunity to play different instruments. The well received performance-based units of work, such as the unit on Samba, need to be increased.
- Music rooms are organised efficiently with easy access to the keyboards and computers. However, the limited space for storing pupils' instruments is inhibiting the extent to which the curriculum can provide sufficient opportunity for performance-based work in the classroom.

### Leadership and management

Leadership and management of music are good

- Music is involved effectively in the whole school monitoring and development programme. There is excellent involvement of pupils in the ongoing improvement of all subjects. You have a clear vision for music as an important part of the school and you are aware that the potential contribution of music to further school improvement has yet to be maximised fully. For example, there is insufficient collection and analysis

of data on pupils' attendance at extra-curricular activities to ensure that the provision meets the needs and interests of all pupils.

- The recently appointed Team Leader for music has made a significant positive impact on the provision for music. He has put good systems into place to secure further improvement. There is a strong music team who work excellently together. Good, mutually beneficial links have been developed with other schools and the local Music Service. However, there are insufficient links with the primary schools to ensure that previous work and experiences are built upon in Key Stage 3.

#### Inclusion

- The curriculum provision and excellent range of extra-curricular activities provide opportunity for all pupils to extend their musical experiences. However, no analysis has been undertaken to check to see if all groups of pupils are involved.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing performance based work within Key Stage 3 and finding ways to create more space for the storage of musical instruments so that they can be used more readily within lessons
- ensuring pupils know what they need to do to improve the quality of their work
- collecting more information about pupils' musical experiences and interests to ensure that all pupils are able to benefit fully from the music provision.

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

A copy of this feedback will be sent to your local authority and will be available to the next institutional inspection team and will be published.

In 6-12 months after the inspection visit, we would like to gather information on the impact of this inspection on the improvements in this subject in your school. To this end you may be contacted by telephone or sent a questionnaire to complete. We appreciate your co-operation in this evaluation.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Knight  
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools