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Mrs C Harvey
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Harvey

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 19 June 2007. 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: discussions with members of staff, pupils, and other partners, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of a range of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of music was judged to be good overall. There is good capacity for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Good teaching and carefully planned lessons enable pupils to make good progress from their starting points and attain standards in line with those expected nationally.
- Pupils enjoy music and most know and can explain what they are expected to do in lessons. Many pupils have a good sense of rhythm and understand the importance of rehearsal during lessons so that their performances are musically accurate. Composition skills are developed successfully through well structured activities.
- While singing is an important part of the provision for music, pupils' attainment in this aspect is not so well developed. You and the subject leader recognise that there is a need to improve singing further by, for example, giving more attention to improving pupils' posture and intonation.
- In all classes, music contributes significantly to the development of pupils' maturity and self-confidence.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Lessons are planned with a clear focus on how pupils' musical skills and understanding are to be developed. Teachers use music games and a variety of activities effectively, often with an emphasis on listening and oral work.
- In all lessons, musical skills and ideas are modelled confidently and pupils respond well to being expected to contribute their suggestions for how their work could be improved. Pupils work well together discussing their ideas and improving their compositions. This was seen in a lesson where pupils, working in pairs, used a computer program to compose short pentatonic pieces and then performed and discussed them with each other.
- Relationships are very positive and all staff display keen enthusiasm and interest in the subject. Despite these strengths, on occasions, a few more able pupils are given tasks which are not sufficiently challenging for them.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- Learning is enriched by a good range of music visits and workshops, several of which contribute to pupils' understanding of a wide range of musical styles. This was seen clearly in the choice of music played in assemblies.

- The curriculum is based on a published scheme. It is regularly evaluated and adapted to meet the needs, interests and abilities of all pupils. However you recognise the need for a review of the curriculum to ensure that pupils' musical skills are developed systematically.
- All Years 5 and 6 pupils are learning a woodwind, brass or percussion instrument as part of the instrumental programme supported by the Standards Fund. These lessons link with the normal music lessons for these pupils and effectively develop their performing and composing skills. Pupils look forward to these lessons and described their feelings by saying "it's really nice to play an instrument with my friends in the band".

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good.

- This is a school where music is a very important part of the overall curriculum and the development of the whole child. Musical events and performances are planned carefully to give all pupils every chance to perform to a range of different audiences.
- Music is led effectively by a well informed, capable and enthusiastic subject leader. Regular monitoring of provision is undertaken and areas for development are identified. A start has already been made to improve the embryonic system for teachers to record and write down the musical progress made by individual pupils as they move through the school.

Subject issues

Data Collection

- Information about pupils' musical participation within school and at home is undertaken regularly.
- The assessment of pupils' musical attainment is a developing area for the school.

Partnership Links

- There are significant links between the school and the local community. However, this year all Year 6 pupils are involved in an instrumental programme, provided by a local organisation and led by the subject leader, and there has not been enough time for these pupils to also work with the teachers from the local secondary school.

Inclusion

- Music is a very important part of the life of the school. Frequent performances and concerts ensure all pupils are involved regularly.

Pupils are actively encouraged to belong to the choir and currently almost a quarter of the school population are involved.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- embedding assessment across the school and continuing to involve all pupils in evaluating their learning
- giving more emphasis in lessons to developing specific singing skills.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

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

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector