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Mrs C Racher
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Racher

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you very much for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on Wednesday 20 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: interviews with members of staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons and extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of music in your school is satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are above average, and this represents good achievement given their attainment on entry to the school which is generally broadly in line with expectations. Some pupils continue to make good progress but overall standards are broadly in line with national expectations in

Key Stage 2. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall during their time at South Hill.

- The whole-class instrumental programme in Year 4 gives much enjoyment and good personal development for the pupils involved. However, the progress that pupils make in this programme is not extended sufficiently in the upper years of Key Stage 2.
- Pupils who participate in individual or small-group instrumental tuition, the orchestra, and the choir, also show enjoyment and increasing skill in their music-making, and make a good contribution to the school community. However, boys are under-represented in these activities, particularly in the choir.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall.

- Teaching in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 is good. Lessons are based around published schemes of work and these are adapted and used confidently by teachers with a strong emphasis on developing children's listening skills.
- From the beginning of this school year, music in Key Stage 2 has been taught by class teachers. Scrutiny of planning files and pupils' work confirms the school's evaluation that whilst pupils make satisfactory progress, work needs to be done to develop class teachers' confidence in teaching composition and performance skills in particular.
- In the Year 4 whole-class djembe lessons there is an appropriate focus on music-making for all and pupils of all abilities enjoy participating. The class teacher usually attends the lessons and this has the dual benefit of improving her musical skills and enabling the djembe teacher to profit from her detailed knowledge of the pupils. However, pupils do not build on these djembe performance skills between lessons and whilst singing features as part of the lessons it is not improved or developed.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- There is a range of classroom instruments, in the dedicated music room. However, at present the school does not have its own djembe drums to support the Year 4 programme. These are brought to the school for each lesson and so are not available for follow-up work during the week or for use in Years 5 or 6.
- As the school acknowledges, while each class teacher in Key Stage 2 has worked hard to plan a scheme of work for their own class, the overall plan for Key Stage 2 requires development to ensure continuity and progression for pupils throughout Years 3-6. The school has already planned a training day in September devoted to this.
- The whole-class djembe programme is a welcome extension and enhancement to the music curriculum, but the school has yet to make effective links between the skills that pupils learn in these lessons and their subsequent development in curriculum music as they progress through the school.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are satisfactory.

- The school's music self-evaluation document is extremely accurate and well-evidenced. The music coordinator/deputy headteacher, who is an active musician, has correctly identified what needs to be done to ensure all pupils increasingly benefit from the music provision.
- While there is good teaching and good standards are achieved in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, the school is aware of the need to develop greater shared understanding across the school about expectations for children's experiences and development in music.

Subject issues: data collection and partnerships

- Class teachers are starting to develop assessment processes but as yet they are not related to National Curriculum levels. Similarly, the assessment data collected is not yet used to inform lesson planning and ensure pupils are given appropriate challenge and support.
- The school has developed a good relationship with the local Music Service which provides the whole-class djembe programme and other instrumental teaching.
- The school has strong links with the neighbouring secondary school which is a specialist arts college. These links are mainly through instrumental work, workshops by visiting musicians for staff and pupils and liaison about pupils who receive extended instrumental tuition. Curriculum links are less well-developed, although both schools have indicated that this is an area that they are planning to work on together in the future.

Inclusion

- Inclusion is a real strength of music in Key Stage 1. In the Foundation Stage, teaching assistants confidently lead small groups of children in singing and rhythm games. All children are included and are able to contribute. In Key Stage 1, they work skilfully to ensure that pupils with specific and sometimes complex learning difficulties and disabilities are able to enjoy their music.
- The development of the instrumental programme in Key Stage 2 also provides good inclusion although as yet the school does not have the instruments for pupils to use between sessions and beyond the end of the programme.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- rewriting the scheme of work in Key Stage 2 so that there is clear progression in musical skills, knowledge, and understanding
- making effective use of assessment to help teachers know what pupils need to improve
- ensuring that the enthusiasm and skills learnt by pupils in the Year 4 djembe programme are built upon in Years 5 and 6, with appropriate resources for pupils to use throughout the week in school

- ensuring that there is an appropriate balance between performing, composing, listening, and appraising in the music curriculum.

These areas match the areas for development that you had already identified in your music self-evaluation.

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, 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

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools