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24 May 2007

Mrs Sharon Dean
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dean

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 22-23 May 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, parents and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of a range of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of music was judged to be good overall. The quality of the vocal programme is outstanding. There is good capacity for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good with significant strengths in vocal and instrumental work.

- The standards pupils attain at the end of Year 6 are broadly in line with those expected nationally. However the standards of singing by pupils in Years 5 and 6 and of performance on instruments by most pupils are above expectations.
- Pupils can select and control instruments well. All make good progress and some individuals are making excellent progress especially those involved in the vocal project. Singing is enjoyed and pupils understand the importance of attention to phrasing, diction and expression. However the composing skills of pupils are not so well developed.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of ensemble work in class lessons and when performing in assemblies.
- Music is embedded across the whole school and is used as a vehicle to promote and develop social, emotional and behavioural skills. Pupils inspire and encourage their friends to 'have a go' and many older pupils become musical role models for the younger children.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Learning is fun in most lessons with teachers providing a good level of challenge for all pupils. Most teachers set high expectations and plan lessons well.
- Pupils want to do their best and they are supportive of each other. Relationships are very good and all pupils' work and performances are valued. Some teachers are starting to use a computer program to record pupils' work in progress which enables pupils to understand how to improve their compositions. However insufficient time is sometimes spent rehearsing and refining work.
- Teachers plan lessons that often link with and enhance other curriculum areas. Occasionally however, insufficient emphasis is given to the development of musical skills and pupils do not make enough musical progress.
- Good learning is achieved through opportunities for pupils to reflect and evaluate their work. However assessment does not always provide sufficient detail about pupils' musical progress to enable work to be matched closely to their learning needs.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- Learning is considerably enhanced by a wide range of workshops, visits by professional musicians and performance opportunities both formal and informal for all pupils.
- The majority of lessons are taught in the music room which is also used regularly by the many visiting instrumental teachers. While there

is a satisfactory range of instruments some are in a poor state of repair and there is a limited number of tuned percussion instruments.

- The musical interests and strengths of individual staff members enable a range of clubs to be organised. Most pupils in Years 3 to 6 are regularly involved in weekly musical activities.
- All pupils in Years 5 and 6 enjoy taking part in the vocal programme. Pupils described how they eagerly look forward to the lessons, summing up their feelings by saying "it's hard work but worth it. I'm a much better singer now".

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good.

- Under your leadership and the enthusiasm of staff, parents and governors music has a high profile within the school. This is reflected in the high numbers of pupils involved in music making. In your role as subject leader, you display passion for the subject and are able to successfully motivate and support colleagues.
- You are aware that there is a need at times for you to separate your subject leader role from that of headteacher, so that you can ensure specific attention is given to the formal monitoring and evaluation of music provision within the school.
- You are also aware of the need to refine further and standardise the assessment of pupils' work. The current system does not provide sufficient detail about their musical progress.

Subject issues

Data Collection

- The staff collect information about pupils' musical participation both within school and at home.
- While teachers have a good awareness of pupils' overall musical progress there is insufficient detail about pupils' musical attainment.

Partnership Links

- There are excellent links between the school and Cheshire Music Service because of your participation in the vocal programme. As you host the only vocal programme in the county, there has been very close evaluation and monitoring of the programme. This culminated in the pupils and their teachers giving demonstration lessons during The Education Show in Birmingham.
- The school has strong links with the parish, using the church as a regular performance venue. There are also good instrumental links between the school, their partner primaries and the local secondary school. However curriculum links are less well developed.

Inclusion

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

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that there is sufficient emphasis on pupils' musical development in all musical activities
- collecting and making more effective use of information about pupils' musical progress
- enabling regular recording of pupils' work so that they can take more responsibility for refining and improving their own work.

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