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Miss C Walton
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Dear Miss Walton

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 21-22 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, 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.

- Pupils enjoy music and their music lessons very much. Their achievement is good and standards are broadly in line with that expected nationally. Many pupils have a good sense of rhythm and are able to maintain a rhythmic pattern on percussion instruments to accompany a song. However their independent composing skills are less well developed.
- Pupils are able to talk about their favourite pieces and styles of music and use the correct musical language when doing so. They readily give reasons for their choices.
- Singing is a key part of most music lessons. Pupils sing with enjoyment and are familiar with a broad range of songs. Younger children sing confidently using movement to help them remember the words.
- Pupils' personal development is significantly enhanced through the many and varied opportunities arranged by the school for them to perform. These events provide excellent opportunities to raise all pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teaching is good. Relationships are very positive and all staff display good enthusiasm and interest for the subject. Lessons are planned carefully to include a variety of activities, especially aural work.
- However a few teachers' lack of subject expertise means that they sometimes miss musical inaccuracies and are unsure how to improve pupils' work. When this happens learning suffers and pupils make less progress.
- Questioning is used regularly and effectively involves pupils in their learning. Peer assessment is used well but not all pupils record their work sufficiently.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

The quality of the curriculum and extra-curricular provision is good with significant strengths in extra-curricular activities.

- Pupils receive weekly music lessons. These are taught in the music room which is an important resource for the school. The space enables pupils to work in groups, ensembles to rehearse, school instruments to be displayed attractively and pupils' instruments to be stored carefully.
- The curriculum is based on a published scheme. Some teachers are beginning to supplement this with other teaching materials, especially when linking music lessons to other subject areas. For instance the recent Greek theme linked music and history very successfully.
- All Year 3 pupils are learning either the cello or the violin as part of the instrumental/vocal programmes provided by the music service. These lessons link with the normal music lessons for these pupils and their musical skills are developed well through a mixture of playing, singing and aural work.

- The well planned curriculum for pupils in Year 6 enables them to use facilities, including computers, at the local secondary school.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good.

- All members of the school community, including the governing body, are very supportive of music and work hard to ensure that the subject permeates all aspects of school life and events are planned specifically to extend pupils' musical horizons.
- You and the subject leader display an extremely strong commitment to enrich the provision through well chosen workshops, including several that have introduced multi-cultural music to the pupils, and performances. Pupils value these events and enjoy performing to a range of different audiences.
- The school benefits considerably from having an energetic and well informed subject leader. While support and guidance for less experienced colleagues is well timed some more structured training for specific music activities is needed.
- Regular monitoring of provision is undertaken and areas for development are identified. For example, a detailed evaluation of the first year of the instrumental/vocal programme was undertaken and discussed with Cheshire Music Services.
- The school is aware of the need for all teachers to record and write down regularly the musical progress made by individual pupils so that appropriate challenge and support can always be provided.

Subject issues

Data Collection

- The staff collect information about pupils' musical participation within school and recognise the need to extend it to their experiences outside of school.
- Recorded information about pupils' musical attainment is at an early stage.

Partnership Links

- There are excellent links between the school and the local secondary school. The carefully planned and evaluated provision involving staff from both schools promotes learning very well and enables all staff to have a thorough understanding of individual pupil's musical strengths, especially for those in Year 6.
- The school has strong links with the Parish, using the local church as a regular performance venue. The Christian ethos is an important part of school life and both music and traditions from other faiths are also explored.

- Very strong links have been forged with the music services. The school was part of a group of schools last year evaluating the instrumental provision for their pupils.

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:

- recording pupils' work regularly so that pupils can hear where improvements are needed
- ensuring all teachers collect and make effective use of information about pupils' musical progress so that appropriate challenge and support can always be provided
- giving more structured support to individual teachers to help develop their expertise and confidence.

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

