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Mrs Moira White  
Headteacher  
Bowmansgreen Primary School  
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Dear Mrs White

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 Friday 15 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.

Whilst there are strengths in provision and outcomes for pupils, particularly in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, the overall effectiveness of music in your school is inadequate at present. We discussed and agreed the reasons for this during the feedback meeting at the end of the inspection day and agreed that the school has the capacity to make the necessary improvements, particularly because of the work already done to raise musical standards and achievement in Key Stage 1.

## Achievement and standards

Achievement in music is inadequate overall.

- Standards for all pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 are at least in line with national expectations. This represents good progress as their attainment on entry to the school is generally below expectations.
- Some pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 2, but this is not the case for the majority of pupils. While a minority of Year 3 pupils make good progress through the whole-class guitar programme, standards are generally below what should be expected. Not enough emphasis is given to the progressive development of pupils' musical skills throughout the key stage. In particular, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to enjoy music-making or develop their instrumental and vocal skills.

## Quality of teaching and learning

Whilst there is some good teaching in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, the overall quality of teaching and learning is inadequate.

- Good teaching was seen in the Foundation class. Through imaginative and well structured play activities, children learnt how to listen carefully and sensitively to different water sounds. Skilful questioning by the teacher encouraged children to talk about the sounds that they heard, and showed how these creative activities can play an important part in the children's social development.
- In Key Stage 1, there is an appropriate emphasis on music-making and listening work. The new music coordinator has introduced the ocarina to help develop pupils' musical skills. Simple notation and graphics are used to support understanding and build effectively on aurally-based learning. Singing is well led, and pupils respond with much enthusiasm and enjoyment.
- However, pupils do not enjoy singing as much in Key Stage 2. While some pupils still show enthusiasm for vocal work, older boys in particular are reticent participants. Not enough improvement is made in the quality of pupils' singing as they progress through Key Stage 2, because the teaching is not challenging enough.
- Lessons seen in Key Stage 2 that were led by class teachers were planned around the completion of a set of activities, rather than being focused on the musical skills, knowledge, and understanding that pupils need to learn in order for them to make progress. Too much time was spent explaining the activity rather than enabling pupils to learn through active music making or listening. Pupils were taken too quickly through a range of activities without spending enough time on correcting and improving their performance.

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

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

- Overall, the time committed to curriculum music by the school is satisfactory. There is also a weekly singing assembly for both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- The school has recently established a dedicated music room which houses the school's increasing range of classroom instruments. This is a good space for music teaching, particularly for the guitar teaching programme as it is quiet and away from other classrooms.
- Schemes of work in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 make good use of published resources, which are, in the main, adapted appropriately to meet the needs of pupils. The guitar teaching programme in Year 3 has been planned by the visiting teacher; other year groups base their programmes around published schemes of work. However, there is not enough adaptation of the programmes or coordination of long-term planning in Key Stage 2 to ensure sufficient continuity and progression for pupils across the key stage.
- There is a small choir that takes part in local events as well as school concerts, and there are opportunities for all pupils to be involved in whole-school productions. However, there are no additional instrumental ensemble opportunities for pupils to play together even though the school has identified nearly 40 pupils who have instrumental skills, mostly acquired out of school, for whom such a group would be beneficial.

## Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music is inadequate overall.

- The improvements that the new music coordinator has brought to music in Key Stage 1, together with the increased resources provided for music by yourself and governing body, demonstrate clear capacity for bringing about the necessary improvements.
- Year 5 pupils commented positively about the dedicated music room that has been established and are pleased that they now have music on a much more regular basis. The improved quality of pupils' progress in Key Stage 1, building on good practice in the Foundation Stage, is a good platform from which to build success in Key Stage 2.

## Subject issues: Data collection and partnerships

- Historically, very few pupils have benefited from additional instrumental tuition provided by the school. However, recently, the school has been proactive in seeking improved opportunities for all Year 3 pupils through the whole class instrumental teaching programme. This programme has encouraged some 20% of the year group to choose to continue with tuition next year. Unfortunately, while good support for learners has been given by a teaching assistant, class teachers have not been able to attend the sessions. This has meant that valuable opportunities for the class teacher and music teacher to share their expertise have been missed.

- The school assesses pupils against the National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 6. However, the standards of work seen indicate that the levels given are over-generous.

#### Inclusion

- The guitar programme includes all Year 3 pupils. However, the programme is not beneficial for some pupils because they cannot cope with the work and their participation is very limited.
- Work is not sufficiently matched to the pupils' different learning needs and consequently significant numbers of pupils do not make sufficient progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed and agreed, included:

- ensuring that teaching and learning in Key Stage 2 is focussed on the development of specific musical skills, knowledge and understanding rather than on the completion of music-related activities
- ensuring that the whole-class instrumental programme makes the best use of teachers' expertise to enable pupils of all abilities to participate, enjoy making music and make good progress
- widening participation in extended instrumental learning and ensemble activities.

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