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Mr M Brogan
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Brogan

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Music

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 3 July 2007 to look at work in music.

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. 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 and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of lessons, a singing assembly, a performance by pupils in Year 6 and an after-school choir rehearsal.

The overall effectiveness of music was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good overall.

- Pupils make good progress overall in lessons and achieve at least in line with national expectations. Particularly good progress was made in a Year 3 lesson where pupils demonstrated a secure sense of pulse and good listening skills. Pupils in Year 5 worked very effectively together with high levels of leadership shown by the pupils selected to conduct their group.

- Pupils enjoy and benefit from a wide range of musical experiences especially the opportunities to perform to others. About one fifth of pupils have instrumental lessons and all are involved in whole school musical events and productions. Pupils also enjoy and make good progress in the movement sessions.
- Singing is good across the school and some pupils reach high standards by the end of Year 6 when they are able to perform solos confidently to the rest of the school and parents. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to demonstrate high levels of attainment in the other aspects of music making.

Quality of teaching and learning of music

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Class teachers show considerable enthusiasm for music and pupils are very appreciative of the way their teachers 'make music fun'. Relationships between teachers and pupils are always at least good so that pupils are given the confidence to explore ideas and learn from their mistakes.
- In the best lessons, teachers make excellent use of effective teaching strategies used in other subjects. Lessons are well planned and adapted in the light of the responses of the pupils. Tasks are managed effectively and questioning used skilfully. For example, pupils in Year 3 were challenged to respond to questions such as 'why?' and 'What if...?' Pupils rose to these high expectations very well, giving thoughtful and perceptive answers.
- However, in some lessons there is insufficient challenge for the most able pupils and the class is not always aware of what they need to do to provide a better answer or musical response. For example, because composing work tends to be limited to producing sound effects, pupils are not helped to understand the more demanding and more musical ways of using sounds to portray more abstract images and feelings.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Teachers make good use of a published scheme often adapting it appropriately to meet the needs of pupils in the class. This scheme is significantly enhanced through additional experiences such as opportunities to hear professional musicians. Good plans are in place to extend provision further next year by including an instrumental programme for all pupils in Year 3.
- Information and communication technology is used well, for example in the Year 6 lesson where pupils had created their own films as starting points for composition work.
- Pupils enjoy the regular singing assemblies and opportunities to learn a wide range of musical instruments. However, they would welcome using

their musical instruments more in class lessons and also having more of a say about the music chosen for their listening.

- Pupils also enjoy taking part in lunch-time and after school activities although participation decreases as pupils gets older.

Leadership and management of subject

The leadership and management of music are good.

- You and your subject leader have been very effective in making music an important part of the life of the school. There is strong commitment to music throughout the school and pupils benefit considerably from the enthusiasm shown by staff, many of whom are doing their utmost to provide as good a music experience for their pupils as possible.
- The subject leader has an accurate view of the music provision. She is well aware of the need to develop easy, manageable methods of monitoring teaching so that pupils' progress is tracked more systematically. Sensible plans to record pupils' work more regularly are a particularly important development.
- Good plans are also in place to ensure the skills of the subject leader continue to be used for music as she takes up a different post in the school.

Subject issues

Data collection

- There is good collection of pupils' views. Information on pupils' musical progress is developing well but there is still some way to go before this data can be used effectively by teachers and senior management. Further work is also needed on clarifying expectations for each year so that teachers can always focus work appropriately.

Partnerships

- Good links have been established with the local Music Service which provides well judged support and resources. There are also good developing links with self-employed musicians.

Inclusion

- Pupils are involved well in all lessons but there is not always enough challenge to extend the more able in music. A good range of opportunities is offered to pupils but the school has not analysed take-up to ensure all groups of pupils are involved. There is a developing amount of information on pupils' musical attainment but no proactive selection as yet as to who would benefit most, musically and personally, from the extended music provision.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- clarifying expectations and making sure teachers and pupils know how to provide a better musical response
- recording pupils' work more regularly so pupils' progress can be monitored and staff given support where most needed
- ensuring pupils who would benefit most, musically and personally, are involved in the extended music provision.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop music in the 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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Knight
Her Majesty's Inspector