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20 July 2007

Mrs Linda Hughes
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hughes

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 6 July 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 is satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall.

- Children join the school in Year 3 having achieved above average standards in their Key Stage 1 assessments. Music work seen in Years 3 and 4 during this inspection visit confirmed that standards are above national expectations.
- By the end of Year 6, some children have achieved standards that are well above national expectations, particularly in their performing skills. However, musical

standards across the school in the upper years of Key Stage 2 are more variable and overall standards are broadly in line with national expectations.

- Around 12% of pupils receive additional instrumental tuition in school. Most of these pupils learn guitar or keyboard instruments with a smaller number learning clarinet or saxophone. Twice-yearly concerts give pupils opportunities to perform in public, either as soloists or in small ensembles. These experiences do much to develop the confidence and self-esteem of the participating pupils. The choir and steel pans ensemble performed to a good standard in your "Summer Serenade" concert, and make good progress in their ensemble performance skills.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall.

- Teaching is good in Year 3. All pupils were involved in active music making and listening throughout the entire lesson and teaching constantly challenged pupils to improve their work through attention to musical detail. Simple staff notation was used but not taught as an end in itself; simple musical scores were understood by pupils as they listened, sang, and played their instruments.
- The majority of teaching across the school is satisfactory. Whilst classroom management strategies and working relationships are always good, strategies for music teaching are less well-developed. Teachers do not always seek to raise the standard of pupils' responses, accepting their first efforts rather than challenging and showing them how to improve.
- In Years 5 and 6, not enough consideration is given to improving pupils' intonation, diction, and phrasing when singing. While teachers made correct use of musical vocabulary, there was too much time spent on speaking or writing and not enough time spent on pupils actively making music.
- In all lessons, there is a need to offer a greater variety of work to challenge the most able students and support those with learning difficulties.
- It was not possible to see any instrumental music lessons during my visit. However, the performance by the choir at your "Summer Serenade" concert was well-directed and reflected some very thorough preparation and rehearsal. The steel pans group was similarly well-rehearsed. The high quality with which this group had been taught was reflected in the fact that, in performance, they were able to direct themselves and did not need a conductor.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- There is a clearly planned scheme of work that has been written and well-resourced by the music coordinator. While the scheme of work has good breadth of musical styles, it does not show how pupils are expected to develop their musical skills, knowledge and understanding as they progress through the school.
- Whilst all statutory requirements are met, provision is less extensive in Year 6 than in other years. Pupils told me that they would like to have more opportunities for music-making in Year 6.

- There is good provision for pupils to extend their musical skills in the steel pan group and choir. The choir provides particularly good opportunities for pupils to perform at local music festivals and events. However, there are no other ensembles for those pupils learning musical instruments.'
- There is a dedicated music room with a good range of instruments, including steel pans and African drums.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music is satisfactory overall.

- The music coordinator is a strong role model for good music teaching. She gives good leadership to the choir and efficiently manages the day-to-day organisation of music throughout the school.
- Moulsham is a very large primary school. With music being taught by class teachers, this means that some 20 teachers are responsible for their pupils' music education. Whilst the music coordinator is provided with time to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, in practice it is difficult to ensure that there is consistency of practice and understanding of good music education. This leads to inconsistencies in the standards achieved by pupils.
- You and your deputy headteacher are new to the school. Our discussions during the inspection showed that you have quickly gained a good understanding of the school's strengths, and what needs to be done in order to improve music further. With the music coordinator, you have started to develop new curriculum plans that indicate increased expectations for music teaching and learning.

Subject issues: Data collection and partnerships

- Teachers make regular assessments of pupils' work in individual projects and activities but these are not related to National Curriculum levels or mapped to show pupils' progression through the school.
- The school has effective links with the local Music Service to provide instrumental teaching. The school has agreed to buy into the Music Service's classroom instrumental teaching programme next year.
- Information about pupils who have specific instrumental skills is passed to the high school on transfer at the end of Key Stage 2, but there is no liaison about curriculum planning or standards.
- Parents are supportive. The summer evening concert was well-attended and supported by parents and governors, and featured practical support by a parent who provided musical accompaniment.

Inclusion

- A particular strength of music at Moulsham is the way in which all musical styles are respected and promoted. Pupils are encouraged to participate, whatever their musical interests. However, boys are underrepresented in extra-curricular music activities and in the choir in particular.
- Music has made a considerable difference to individual pupils who have experienced difficulties in other areas of school life at Moulsham.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving consistency in the quality of teaching and learning in music through, for example, raising musical expectations, focusing on active music-making and providing a variety of work to challenge pupils of all abilities
- ensuring that the music curriculum plan shows clear expectations for the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding as they progress through the school
- strengthening partnerships with the Music Service to offer a broader range of instrumental tuition and with the high school to ensure continuity in the curriculum as pupils transfer into Key Stage 3.

We agreed that, as a consequence of these three areas for improvement, you will aim to increase the number and range of pupils participating in ensemble activities and performances.

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