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Mrs E Ward  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Ward

### Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 11 - 12 October 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 student 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 and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of lessons, an assembly and a variety of extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of music is good with some outstanding features. Following some instability in the staffing of the music department there is now a strong team with a new subject leader. Provision has improved significantly and there is excellent capacity for further improvement.

## Achievement and Standards

Achievement and standards are good with outstanding features particularly in the commitment and excellent response shown by the students.

- Progress is good in lessons. Students are very quick and complete tasks impressively with care and enjoyment. While students attain highly, achievement and progress would be even greater with more challenge in lessons. For example, some of the aspects of the higher levels of attainment are not yet being explored fully.
- There is good and increasing involvement of students in the extra-curricular activities. Excellent opportunities are given for students to take the lead, notably the choir led by a Year 11 student and also the string quartets led by students in the sixth form. Standards of performance in these extra-curricular activities are always at least good.

## Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good with outstanding features particularly in the depth of professional expertise.

- All teachers make excellent use of a high level of subject knowledge. For example, students are given well judged Power Point presentations that highlight key points in the area being studied. Good questioning also maintains students' engagement, although some opportunities were missed to pose more challenging questions.
- Lessons are well planned and organised. Tasks are structured well although some learning objectives describe the activity rather than give clear detail about the specific skills, knowledge and understanding to be developed. Occasionally, more opportunity needs to be given to enable students to learn while performing.
- Appropriate emphasis is given to practical work and the promotion of students' creativity. Students value the music lessons but would welcome more time to develop their ideas as well as perform together as a class.
- Extra-curricular activities are led excellently. There is just the right balance of humour, praise and challenge.

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

The overall quality of the curriculum and extra-curricular provision is good with an outstanding range and quality of extra-curricular activities.

- There is a good broad curriculum in Key Stage 3. Materials are well designed and provide a good range of learning opportunities. However, the subject leader is aware of the need to develop the scheme of work further to ensure there is sufficient depth of study for students to reach the very highest levels of attainment.

- The accommodation is excellent and there are good resources. However, some of these resources are under-used and the students are right to ask for more opportunity to perform on quality instruments such as the marimba and drum kit.
- Excellent extra-curricular provision has been skilfully extended to include a junior orchestra in addition to the senior orchestra.

### Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good with some excellent features, particularly in the commitment of the school to make the most of music for all its students.

- You have a clear and perceptive vision for music and its role in improving the education experience for all your students. You know what your students need and are giving excellent attention to ensuring their needs are met.
- Following some instability in the staffing of the music team there is now a strong team that is taking forward the developments made over the last two years. The new subject leader has already made a marked positive impact on staff and students.
- The team relationships are developing well and good planning and assessing structures are being put into place. The subject leader is sensibly refining the assessment sheets to include more specific detail.

### Subject issues

#### Data Collection

- Appropriate structures for collecting information about students' musical progress are in place. Good registers are also kept of all extra-curricular activities.

#### Partnership Links

- In addition to well developed partnerships with some primary schools good links are being developed with other secondary schools. Students also benefit from involvement in regional music activities managed by the music service.

#### Inclusion

- There is good inclusion in music. Students say that equality is a strength of the subject provision. All feel they are given opportunity to develop their musical skills. However, the school is aware that analysis of take-up of extra-curricular activities and study of music beyond Key Stage 3 is needed to confirm that the music provision is truly inclusive.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- refining learning objectives and assessment sheets so students are clear of expectations and know how to improve their work further
- developing the scheme of work in Key Stage 3 to ensure sufficient depth of study
- making full use of the range of quality resources and giving students more extended time for group composing and class performing activities.

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

Tony Knight  
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools