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Mrs B Davies
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Davies

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 05 December 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 colleges 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.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory. Singing is a particular strength, and the capacity for further improvement is good.

Achievement and Standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Pupils start school with broadly average attainment. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards are in line with national expectations and pupils make satisfactory progress overall. In class lessons, pupils make better progress in Key Stage 1 than they do in Key Stage 2.
- Singing is a strength of the school. Pupils sing every day, and the whole school participates vocally in public concerts. Pupils recognise that singing is good because it is rehearsed properly.
- A good number of pupils receive specialist instrumental tuition in and out of school and they make good progress. Instrumental work in class lessons is satisfactory. One reason why it is not better than this is because there are not always enough instruments to go round. Pupils are right to expect a greater number and greater variety of instruments to play in class.
- The school recognises that pupils make most progress in performing and listening, and that their improvising and composing skills are less developed.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Teaching is strongest in Key Stage 1, where lessons are well planned with a clear focus on the development of pupils' music skills and understanding. This helps teachers to make informed assessments of what pupils have learned and to plan the next steps in their learning. Planning is always thorough in Key Stage 2 but it is not as effective because it does not have the same depth of focus on pupils' musical learning.
- In the lessons observed, there was an appropriate emphasis on practical music making. However, in less effective lessons too much time was spent explaining or discussing non-musical matters and there was not enough active engagement of pupils.
- Singing is modelled confidently by all teachers and this does much to promote a positive image for singing throughout the school. However, unaccompanied songs are not always pitched to suit pupils' voices, particularly in the lower years of the school.
- Relationships are good. Pupils behave very well and teachers have good classroom management skills, creating a very positive learning environment in all classes.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- All classes have a music lesson every week and there are additional opportunities for music as part of cross-curricular projects.
- The school has adopted a published scheme of work to provide a consistent curriculum framework across the school. However, you have made it clear that staff have the flexibility to work beyond published schemes, so long as lessons are planned appropriately. Consequently, whilst all lessons draw on the resources, the majority are planned individually by teachers to meet the needs of their pupils and suit their own teaching styles.
- The school recognises that assessment of pupils' work is an area for further improvement across the school. There is some good practice, particularly where there are clear musical learning objectives planned, but it is inconsistent and lacks continuity.
- A music club provides opportunities for pupils to perform together after school. Concerts have been given with local churches and local artistes. Public performances (such as the highly regarded dramatic productions that include musical items) do much to boost pupils' confidence and self-esteem and help build good links between the school and the community.
- Pupils have opportunities to hear different styles of music informally during the day and all styles of music are respected. The school recognises that the music curriculum could do more to extend pupils' experience of a greater diversity of musical styles and cultures.

Leadership and management of music

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

- The school's self-evaluation and action plan for music are good. In the short period of time since you became the acting headteacher, you and your staff have accurately identified all key areas for improvement in music. You are providing excellent, effective support for the music coordinator and you are both promoting an ethos of music for all in the school. This, together with the good practice and positive features seen during this inspection, confirms that there is good capacity to improve music further.
- However, the school recognises that there are aspects that are at a relatively early stage of development. For example, inconsistencies in lesson planning, teaching, and assessment have limited pupils' overall progress.
- The school was not aware of the Standards Fund for wider musical opportunities in Key Stage 2 or of other national initiatives in music education.

Subject issues: Data collection and partnerships

- The school has a positive partnership with the local authority Music Service which provides pupils with opportunities to receive brass, woodwind, strings, or keyboard lessons.

- Links with secondary schools are not well-established and so curriculum liaison work between phases is underdeveloped.
- Whilst the school is aware of individual pupil strengths and weaknesses (particularly in performance work), there is insufficient tracking of pupils' musical progress through the school.

Inclusion

- Pupils with learning difficulties are identified and there is good consideration of their needs in all lesson plans. Teachers work skilfully to make sure that everyone is included in class activities. In Key Stage 1, good use is made of teaching assistants to support the particular learning needs of individual pupils.
- All pupils have equal access to instrumental tuition. Everyone participates in the school productions.

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

- ensuring that all lessons have the development of pupils' musical skills, knowledge, and understanding as their central focus, so that teachers can accurately assess and track the musical progress that pupils are making and raise expectations of what they can achieve
- increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their developing skills, knowledge, and understanding creatively in composition work
- exploring links with the music service and other musicians to provide whole class instrumental learning in Key Stage 2
- improving resources for curriculum music, particularly in the range and number of instruments available for pupils to use.

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 college. 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