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Dear Mr Edwards

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you very much for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 21-22 January 2008.

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: interviews with members of staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of music at Garforth Community College is outstanding. Expectations are of the highest standard and the range of courses and performance opportunities offered to students is exemplary. An inclusive ethos enables students of all abilities and interests to achieve well.

Achievement and Standards

Achievement and standards are outstanding.

- Students join the school with standards that are just above average. They make good progress in Key Stage 3 to reach standards that are well above average. Students taking GCSE music continue to make good progress and achieve exceptionally high standards; this represents good progress in relation to their abilities. Students make good progress in the sixth form and work to above average standards.
- The numbers of students opting for music in Key Stages 4 has increased over recent and is now well above the national average. Numbers in the sixth form have also increased greatly in the past two years. Both of these increases are because additional courses have been introduced to suit a much broader range of musical interests and learning styles.
- Good numbers participate in additional instrumental and vocal lessons, and in extra-curricular activities. All groups of students are represented. The achievements of many are regularly recognised through success in a variety of instrumental examinations. Singing is strong throughout the school, both in lessons and in ensembles. Boys and girls sing confidently and to a good standard, although many more girls than boys sing in the school choirs.
- Students' enjoyment of the wide range of musical styles and cultures on offer at Garforth is outstanding and they are given many opportunities to demonstrate their creativity and musical leadership. Music makes an outstanding contribution to students' personal development and to the ethos and culture of the college.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers have high expectations. Students' behaviour in lessons is outstanding and the excellent relationships that they have with their teachers is an important reason for their good progress.
- Teachers have good personal musical skills. Lessons are led well and music is rehearsed thoroughly with persistent challenge and confident modelling by teachers. Lessons are well-planned; learning objectives have a clear focus on the development of students' musical skills. There is a constant emphasis on practical music-making and students' aural development. Recordings of students' work are made regularly although these are not always used effectively at the end of lessons to help students reflect on their learning and to plan further improvement.
- Different teaching styles are used effectively in Key Stage 4 to meet students' personalised learning needs. However, in Key Stage 3, there is not always enough variation in teaching styles, particularly when activities involve notation or literacy work.

- No sixth form teaching was observed during this inspection. However, students in the sixth form spoke warmly about the high level of personal support and tutoring given to them by their teachers. Planning is thorough and the marking of students' work is rigorous and detailed.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- In common with other subjects, music in Key Stage 3 is accelerated and taught in Years 7 and 8. Small class sizes and excellent planning help students to achieve well in these two years.
- In Year 9, students who have opted to continue studying music follow a "foundation" programme, taking additional qualifications such as the Arts Council's "Arts Award" and instrumental and theory examinations, which help them make good progress in the skills required for success in their chosen course.
- GCSE Music and BTEC First courses are offered at Key Stage 4. GCE A Level courses in Music and Music Technology, and BTEC National courses are offered in the sixth form. This broad curriculum provision enables students with a full range of musical needs, interests, and abilities to participate in curriculum music.
- There are excellent performance opportunities, such as the orchestra, steel pans, wind band, string orchestra, musical-dramatic production, choirs, jazz band and ska group, which all perform to a good standard. Training groups help younger or less experienced performers gain confidence before progressing to the more advanced ensembles.

Leadership and management of music

The overall quality of leadership and management is outstanding.

- There is a clear vision for music and excellent expectations that everyone should achieve the highest standards. Outstanding support is given to the music staff and the department from senior managers and governors. The written self-evaluation for music accurately identifies strengths and areas for further development. The school rightly celebrates the high quality of its work, but it is not complacent. For example, it wants to encourage even more students to participate in the Arts by providing wider opportunities for all in Year 9.
- Teachers have regular professional development and have a good awareness of national initiatives.
- Assessment is regular, efficient and used effectively to track students' progress and identify where intervention and support is needed.
- There is very good accommodation for music although growing numbers mean that private practice space is at a premium, a concern raised by sixth form students. There are good quality recording and information

technology facilities and the new Music Studio is an excellent rehearsal space.

Subject issues: Data collection and partnerships

- The instrumental and vocal teaching programme, which includes teachers from the local music service and tutors employed directly by the college, is very well managed.
- Regular registers are kept for all ensemble rehearsals and the participation of groups and individuals monitored.
- There are excellent links with Leeds College of Music, Huddersfield University and with professional musicians. The annual Garforth Arts Festival provides a range of education workshops for all local schools and gives students and the whole community a chance to hear performances by world-class performers.
- There are outstanding links with primary schools, including the provision of subsidised instrumental tuition and curriculum teaching where the expertise of the Garforth staff and the college's resources are complemented by the primary class teachers' expertise and knowledge of their pupils. Garforth students also play an important part by musically mentoring primary school pupils.

Inclusion

- Inclusion is outstanding. Through the excellent curriculum, careful monitoring, and good teaching all students are able to participate in musical activities that meet their needs, abilities and interests. Students from other schools are also able to benefit from participating in community ensembles and activities such as the Garforth Jazz Rock Band.

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

- ensuring that teaching styles are varied to suit the learning needs of all students in all Key Stage 3 lesson activities
- involving more boys in singing ensembles, to increasingly match the good number of girls that sing in the school choirs.

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