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Mrs Bidwell
Headteacher
Westley Middle School
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Dear Mrs Bidwell

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in Music

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 21 February 2008 to look at work in music.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: discussions with members of staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of lessons.

Features of good practice observed

- The excellent relationships and real enthusiasm for music shown by the subject leader ensure pupils enjoy their music making. Pupils express high praise for the commitment of the staff.
- Expectations are high and pupils respond well to being asked to provide a better answer or piece of work. All work is managed well and tasks are clear. There is an excellent emphasis on both musical skills and the broader skills needed to make good progress. The explaining to pupils about why appropriately selected broader skills are essential for music is particularly impressive.
- Skills are being developed well in lessons and there is clear progress in the quality of pupils' singing. Information and communication technology is used effectively by some pupils and the school is sensibly extending the range of equipment so that more can benefit from this musical resource.
- Pupils are rightly very appreciative of the wide range of opportunities for instrumental learning and extra-curricular activities. While good numbers

are involved, the school is aware of the need to encourage more boys and to investigate further the extent the provision meets the need of all pupils.

- The subject leader is making good use of recent developments such as the Key Stage 3 Strategy for Music. Her high quality self-evaluation and desire for constant improvement reflects very effective reflective practice.
- Information in the subject file is well organised and provides good detail, for example, in the subject Self-Evaluation Form.
- The support you have given the subject leader and the subject has helped to improve practice and, as a result, music is contributing increasingly significantly to the overall personal development and well-being of pupils.

Areas for development

As we discussed, the provision in the school could be further improved by:

- refining the learning outcomes so that there is even clearer emphasis on increasing depth of musical understanding and quality of musical response (and exploring the extent to which the broader outcomes can also be defined explicitly)
- using these refined learning outcomes as the basis for assessment and the tracking of progress
- checking pupils have enough opportunity to learn through listening and watching work being modelled rather than from verbal explanations, and relating activities to real tasks and procedures whenever possible.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop music in the school.

As I explained previously, 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.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Knight
Her Majesty's Inspector