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Miss M Chapman
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Chapman

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 06 March 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 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.

The overall effectiveness of music at Hollin Primary is good. A distinctive feature is the outstanding teaching provided by your music teacher and choral animateur. Singing is a real strength of the school. This teaching enables pupils to enjoy their music and make good progress but there are no opportunities for them to extend their musical learning through other forms of music making. Older and more able pupils are right when they say that they would like to have specialised instrumental tuition to build on the progress that they make in their class lessons and singing work. Similarly, opportunities

for them to apply their musical skills expressively in creative work are also less well developed.

Achievement and Standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Pupils start school with limited musical experiences. They make good progress to reach standards that are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. Singing work is particularly well developed. Whilst pupils participate in short improvisation tasks, there are not enough opportunities for them to use sounds creatively, for example in making expressive compositions.
- Pupils really enjoy music lessons. Their enjoyment starts in the nursery where children eagerly and excitedly await their turn in call-and-response singing games, through to Year 6 where, as one boy said, "music is proper fun".
- Around half of all Key Stage 2 pupils are members of the school choir, including a good proportion of boys. Pupils of all ages are given good opportunities to sing in public, and this does much to build their confidence and boost their self-esteem. However, whilst Year 4 and 5 pupils play recorder in class lessons and two pupils receive private instrumental lessons out of school, no pupils learn additional individual instrumental skills beyond this in school and there are no extra-curricular instrumental performance groups.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

- Teaching is sharply focussed on the development of pupils' listening skills. Expert modelling, questioning and engaging pupils in music-making activities improves their confidence and understanding and helps them to make good progress. For example, in one lesson Year 3 pupils were taught to play a simple three-note melody on the recorder through rhythm games, echo singing activities and finally through playing the tune, which they were able to do because they had internalised the rhythm and melody through the earlier tasks. At the end of this lesson, the teacher was absolutely correct when she told the children that their "listening ears are coming on a treat".
- The music teachers have high expectations of what children can achieve, and they provide good challenge. For example, in an upper Key Stage 2 singing session, the teacher constantly reminded the children of the need to sing with good tone and expression, and he showed them how to do this through high-quality modelling and instruction.
- Throughout lessons, the music teachers constantly assess children's responses and tailor their activities to ensure that everyone can enjoy making progress. These teachers have a good working knowledge of

pupils' progress, but written records of how well pupils are doing are not so well developed.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- Every pupil participates in a 30 minute lesson with the specialist music teacher every week. Lessons are taught in half-classes, with each group supported by the class teacher or the teaching assistant. This enables teaching to focus on every pupil's learning, and maximises participation in music-making. There is excellent emphasis on pupils' aural development and musical understanding but fewer opportunities for them to apply these skills creatively. In addition there are weekly singing sessions for Key Stages 1 and 2 and informal music activities included in other curriculum work such as singing in Spanish.
- The school choir and other smaller vocal groups participate in the annual local music festival and in other regional events. The school makes a generous subsidy towards transport to these events, and this ensures that no-one is excluded from participating on the grounds of cost. While these experiences provide excellent opportunities the range of additional opportunities is limited to vocal work and so pupils with other musical interests and aptitudes have less chance to develop their skills.

Leadership and management of music

The overall quality of leadership and management is good.

- You give good support to the music co-ordinator and pupils' musical progress through generous timetabling and a shared belief that increased musical skills and performance opportunities benefit pupils' confidence and well-being.
- The music co-ordinator is extremely knowledgeable and her teaching is informed by very sound principles for music education. She is continuing her own learning through participation in the Wider Opportunities course run by the Open University and Trinity College of Music. The scheme of work has been adapted from published resources, gives a good sense of progression, and covers all statutory requirements. Although it is good that class teachers and teaching assistants are present for the lessons taught by the music specialist, opportunities are missed to develop their understanding of music through, for example, involving them in assessment or planning which would help them to understand how pupils' make progress in music and would enable an even greater use of music in other lessons.

Subject issues: data collection and partnerships

- The partnership with the vocal animateur does much to improve the standard of choral work in the school and provides boys with an outstanding role model which encourages their participation in the choir.
- The music coordinator is currently seconded one day a week to work in an advisory capacity. Not only does this enable good practice to be shared with other schools, it also allows fresh ideas to be brought to music at Hollin Primary.
- Year 4 pupils participated in a ten-week junk orchestra project in the Autumn Term with a public performance, which provided a good experience for the pupils involved. However, the impact of this project was limited because it was not possible to sustain the work once the project was completed.

Inclusion

- Outstanding teaching, high expectations and good role models for boys and girls ensure that there is excellent inclusion in music lessons and in choir participation. However, extra-curricular opportunities are limited to vocal work.

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

- building on the excellent vocal extra-curricular activities by finding ways to ensure that pupils with different musical interests and aptitudes have opportunities to develop their skills further
- providing more opportunities for pupils to use their musical skills expressively and creatively in composing work
- helping class teachers increase their knowledge and understanding of music and pupils' musical progress, so they can make even greater use of music in other lessons.

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

