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Miss B Clarke
Headteacher
Hill West Primary School
Clarence Road
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B74 4LD

Dear Miss Clarke

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 07 February 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 Hill West is good. A distinctive feature is the excellent ongoing partnerships with the secondary school and professional musicians. A further strength is the consistency of assessment, developed in response to a key issue in your last Section 5 inspection – although there is still more to be done with the use of these assessments to ensure that all pupils are fully challenged, particularly the more able.

Achievement and Standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Pupils start school with broadly average musical attainment. They make good progress in Key Stage 1, and continue doing so until the end of Key Stage 2 when standards are above average overall. Rhythm work is particularly well developed, although standards of singing remain in line with national expectations.
- Pupils enjoy music, particularly the partnership activities which do much to promote their self-esteem and sense of teamwork.
- Overall numbers of pupils participating in instrumental tuition and extra-curricular activities are good, although there is a greater proportion of girls than boys and less involvement of Year 6 pupils than other year groups.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Lessons are well-planned and have clear musical learning objectives. There is a common approach to the start of lessons, where ongoing skills such as pitch, tempo and dynamics are revisited and pupils become increasingly confident with musical concepts and vocabulary. All lessons include practical music-making activities. Teachers model work confidently, although sometimes too much time is spent on verbal explanation rather than practical demonstration.
- Working relationships are good, enabling children to have the confidence to participate and explore their ideas. Teaching assistants' support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding, enabling these pupils to participate confidently and make very good progress.
- Recordings are made of pupils' work and teachers' assessment of pupils' achievements is regular and effectively linked to National Curriculum levels. However, these assessments are not always used to plan further work that targets higher standards or stretches the more able in class work. An example of good practice was in the Film Music project with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) where more advanced instrumentalists used their skills alongside pupils playing classroom percussion.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- There is a comprehensive scheme of work which is adapted from three published resources and provides class teachers with clear frameworks and guidance for teaching. Whilst the scheme of work ensures a good balance of experiences and promotes a good range of musical styles and

cultures, there is less consideration about how pupils' skills and understanding are progressed over time. For example, there are similar composition tasks in Years 2 and 4 where pupils are set the task of composing descriptive music to accompany a story or a painting. The project plans are very similar and do not make clear enough differences in expectation for Year 2 and Year 4 pupils.

- There are sufficient instruments for class music work although pupils are right to suggest that a greater range would help them to enjoy their work even more, particularly in upper Key Stage 2.
- There is a large school choir, thriving recorder group and a good range of instrumental lessons available. However, there is not a school instrumental ensemble for pupils who play instruments other than the recorder.

Leadership and management of music

The overall quality of leadership and management is good.

- The school's self-evaluation accurately identifies what is successful and what needs to be done to improve provision further. The music coordinator has outstanding organisation skills and is given excellent support by you and the senior management team. There is a noticeably strong team ethic amongst the staff and this helps you share ideas and good practice. However, the music co-ordinator has not yet had any opportunity to observe and monitor the quality of class or instrumental lessons.
- The music co-ordinator has received very good support and training from within the specialist arts college cluster, but has not been involved in music professional development beyond this. The school is not aware of or involved with any national programmes, such as the instrumental/vocal programmes for Key Stage 2 or the *Sing Up* campaign.

Subject issues: Data collection and partnerships

- The school has an excellent ongoing partnership with Arthur Terry School, a specialist arts college, and other schools in the local cluster. There is a Year 4 samba project which includes professional development for the class teacher and a commitment to team working. This project is led by the secondary school head of music and a senior student. There is also a successful bridging project which helps the secondary school make an accurate assessment of pupils' work before they join year 7. The secondary curriculum effectively builds on the skills of every pupil, not just those who receive additional instrumental tuition.
- Other partnership work has included the very successful silent film music project and a "playground singing" project with the choral group *Ex Cathedra*.

- There are good links with the Music Service which provides a good range of instrumental tuition. Regular registers are taken for all instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities.

Inclusion

- There is good commitment to inclusion and all groups of students are represented in instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities, including those learning English as an additional language. However, not enough is done to encourage and enable more boys' to participate.

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

- increasing the number of boys involved in instrumental tuition and extra-curricular activities and providing an ensemble for all instrumentalists
- building teachers' confidence in leading music lessons by developing their ability to model and demonstrate work with less emphasis on spoken explanations
- upgrading and expanding the range of classroom instruments, particularly for upper Key Stage 2 work
- making better use of assessment data and curriculum plans to promote pupils' progression through expectation, not just by outcome.

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