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Ms S Campbell
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Campbell

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 04 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 any links you have developed with other schools and agencies.

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: discussions with members of staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of lessons, assemblies and ensembles.

The overall effectiveness of music is good. Music is a very important subject in the school and there are exceptional opportunities for many pupils to work with a wide range of partners. The school, having submitted an application for re-assessment in November 2007, has been recommended for the re-award of Artsmark gold and is waiting for confirmation early next term.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are good.

- Pupils are keen to perform and achieve broadly in line with national expectations at the end of Year 6. This represents good progress overall given their level of attainment when they join the school. Pupils achieve particularly well in Years 3 to 6.
- Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy a range of music activities. They use instruments carefully and recognise how sounds can be put together successfully.
- Singing and aural work is a regular part of music lessons and pupils are able to identify, play and sing rhythm patterns accurately.
- Pupils enjoy their music lessons, understand how to use musical elements and perform well together. They successfully learn how to evaluate each others' work. Good behaviour and positive attitudes in lessons contribute significantly to pupils' exceptional personal development.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- All staff display good enthusiasm and interest for the subject. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Pupils are well aware of classroom routines and their teacher's expectations when using musical instruments.
- Pupils are given the confidence to express their opinions and in the best lessons are helped to plan and evaluate their work effectively. However work in progress is not recorded and so pupils cannot hear their own compositions which makes it much harder for them to make improvements.
- When expectations are high and teaching enables the pupils to develop their musical skills systematically, then progress is rapid. However more able pupils are not always challenged effectively or encouraged to use their instruments.
- Pupils are taught how to understand different musical styles and traditions and links are made successfully between music and other subjects.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- A generous amount of time is given to music lessons. Pupils in Year 4 also benefit from learning the recorder as part of the government funded instrumental programme.
- Pupils' musical skills are developed well by using and adapting a published scheme and a range of other materials. The school is aware of the need to monitor more closely how all teachers use this scheme in their lessons.
- A significant strength of the curriculum is the excellent range of opportunities for most pupils to take part in concerts and workshops organised by the local secondary school and professional music organisations. These opportunities introduce pupils to a very wide range of musical styles and cultures. Pupils speak warmly of how much they enjoy taking part. These events not only broaden pupils' musical expertise and experiences but also greatly enhance their personal and social development.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good.

- The subject leader works tirelessly to promote music and to provide the best possible high quality workshops for all pupils. Senior managers are very supportive of music and work hard to ensure that the subject permeates all aspects of school life. Music is seen as very important to the development of the whole child. The regular performances are enabling parents and carers to become more involved and supportive of their children's musical experiences.
- Monitoring of provision is undertaken effectively. There is a good understanding of how provision can be improved further.
- Some identification of pupils' musical ability and progress is undertaken but is not done consistently. As a result, it is not possible to track easily an individual pupil's progress.

Subject issues:

Partnership Links

- The very wide range of arts provision and projects enriches the curriculum providing an exceptional breadth and variety of visits and extended projects for all pupils. Many of these take place in conjunction with the local secondary school and with professional music organisations in the city.

- Teachers benefit from a good range of training opportunities run by both the music service and secondary school.

Inclusion

- The drive for inclusion is central to the philosophy of the school. The colourful displays and photographs around the corridors celebrate the many arts events in which the pupils have taken part.
- The school collects information about pupils' musical interests and involvement in instrumental lessons. However the information about their musical progress is less well established.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- making sure that there is sufficient challenge especially for the more able pupils in music lessons
- recording pupils' work during lessons so that they can understand and hear how to make improvements to their own compositions and performances
- collecting more regular information about pupils' musical achievement to ensure all make good progress.

I very much hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop music in your school.

As I explained in my previous letter, 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.

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

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector