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Mr L Howes
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Howes

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on the 19-20 May 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, ensembles and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of music is good with some outstanding features. Music is used successfully to support learning in other subjects and to develop pupils' listening skills and their ability to work cooperatively. The support the school gives to music is rightfully recognised by the Artsmark award.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are good. Pupils' personal development is outstanding.

- Music helps children in the Foundation Stage develop not only their musical skills but also their social skills through sharing instruments and taking turns. They enjoy their lessons and can recognise and create different sounds to accompany well known songs and rhymes.
- Standards overall are broadly in line with national expectations and pupils' achievement is good given their attainment when they join the school. However pupils do not continue to make similar progress in Year 6, as although they have weekly singing lessons with other classes in Key Stage 2, they do not have a regular class music lesson.
- Pupils have a good understanding and sense of rhythm. During a lesson for Year 5 pupils, groups played different rhythm patterns together, accurately maintaining their individual parts. They sing enthusiastically and have a good understanding of the importance of diction and phrasing.
- Concerts and other music events are used very effectively to develop pupils' personal, social and behavioural skills. Pupils have developed excellent social skills which are evident in the way they support and help each other during rehearsals and lessons. Individual students show impressive confidence in the way they lead groups and the whole school during singing assemblies.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Pupils are given regular opportunities to experiment with instruments and their voices to create sounds and longer compositions. Links are often made successfully between music and other subjects. However, because work in progress is not recorded aurally, pupils cannot hear their own compositions which makes it harder for them to make improvements.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully, expectations are usually high and because most use assessment information carefully, work is matched successfully to individual pupils' capabilities and interests. This enables all pupils to make at least good progress.
- Working relationships are positive and all pupils are given the chance to perform in lessons. However, opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils, or the teacher, to demonstrate what is expected. As a result, the musical progress of pupils who find it harder to follow spoken instructions is occasionally inhibited.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- The curriculum is planned very carefully and teachers ensure that the development of pupils' musical knowledge, skills and understanding is at the heart of all lessons. Teachers benefit from using an extensive range of helpful materials provided by the local music service and also from attending regular in-service training and external courses.
- Music plays an important role in the school and the extensive range of visits and workshops is used successfully to increase pupils' enjoyment and widen their understanding of music. They spoke enthusiastically about the themed weeks, for example the Japanese and Australian weeks, also how much they were enjoying the European Awareness Week. These events broaden pupils' music expertise and experiences by exploring a very wide range of musical styles and cultures. The school also ensures that pupils are able to perform at a range of venues in the local area.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 also benefit from learning percussion instruments and how to be part of a Samba group, as part of the Government's funded instrumental programme.
- The school is disappointed that at present they are unable to offer individual instrumental lessons and are urgently exploring ways to overcome this and to provide lessons for all those who would like to take part.
- There are two choirs for pupils in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. These are well attended by boys and girls who value the chance to sing a range of songs.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good.

- The subject leader and the curriculum leader ensure that music permeates the school. They work hard to provide the best possible high quality workshops for all pupils. Together they provide good leadership of the subject and effective guidance and support, when needed, for colleagues. Senior managers and governors are very supportive of the subject and recognise its importance to the development of the whole child.
- Monitoring of provision and self evaluation is undertaken regularly. There is a good understanding of how provision can be improved further. Careful tracking of pupils' music ability and progress is undertaken and this is shared regularly with all staff to help them plan their lessons. The school recognises that there is a need to provide regular class music lessons for pupils in Year 6.

- More parents are now supporting their children by attending the regular concerts.

Subject issues:

Partnership Links

- Strong links exist with the Tees Valley Music Service which provides high quality workshops for pupils and a good range of training opportunities for the staff. However the school is disappointed that the music service is unable to offer individual lessons for pupils and is actively pursuing ways to change this situation.
- The school is working hard to increase the links with other schools in the area.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- finding ways for pupils to make continued progress during Year 6
- involving pupils in listening to their work in progress so that they can evaluate their compositions and make improvements
- working to overcome the barriers that currently exist, in order to provide more instrumental lessons.

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