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Miss R Huff  
Headteacher  
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Dear Miss Huff

### 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 19 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 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 is satisfactory with some good features, particularly in the provision for instrumental tuition and ensembles.

## Achievement and Standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory with some good features.

- Pupils join the school with broadly average musical attainment. They make satisfactory progress to reach standards in line with national expectations at the end of Year 6.
- Most pupils sing in tune and with confidence. However, there is insufficient part-singing, particularly in the older year groups, and teaching does not challenge standards of singing to be better than broadly average.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to create musical ideas. Pupils compose confidently but their compositions do not show an increasing depth of understanding, for example in form and structure, as they get older.
- A good proportion of pupils receive additional instrumental tuition in and out of school. The greatest number of pupils learning an instrument is in Year 4 as there is some drop-out in the later years of Key Stage 2. Those who continue learning, enjoy performing in groups and in public. Children have opportunities to sing and play in the end of-term concerts, but there is not a regular school choir.
- Everyone participates in the school productions. All pupils have equal access to instrumental tuition. However, insufficient use is made in class lessons of the advanced skills of pupils who receive additional instrumental tuition.

## Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features.

- Whilst some lessons are taught by the music coordinator the majority are taken by higher level teaching assistants during class teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time. Working relationships are good. Pupils behave very well and all adults have good classroom management skills.
- Lessons are prepared thoroughly. Clear objectives are shared with pupils. However, sometimes these are descriptions of the lesson activities rather than detail of the musical progress that pupils are expected to make. Most lessons start with a warm-up activity, although this is not always linked to the main part of the lesson that follows.
- All lessons observed included practical music making opportunities. In some lessons, too much time is spent on verbal explanation and this restricts pupils' active engagement in music. Similarly, there are occasions when weaker literacy or music notation skills prevent pupils from making better progress in their musical development. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, some pupils struggled to perform simple rhythms accurately because they could not decipher the notation and were not given clear aural models to imitate.

- Whilst lesson plans are followed diligently and all activities completed, there is not always enough challenge to improve the quality of pupils' work. For example, when pupils are singing, mistakes are not always corrected or suggestions made about how they could improve the quality of their performance. Progress is made largely through repetition and increasing familiarity.
- Some good assessment practices are used. For example, in a lesson led by the music coordinator, the children's compositions were recorded so that they could appraise their work. In another lesson, the class teacher came to observe and assess children's progress whilst the teaching assistant led the lesson. However, these assessment practices are not used consistently across the school and are not used to refine the planning of work and improve provision.
- All pupils are included well in class music lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that everyone is included and able to participate. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are identified and there is good support for them in lessons.

### Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

The overall quality of the curriculum and extra-curricular provision is satisfactory with some good features.

- All classes have a music lesson every week, and there are additional opportunities for music as part of cross-curricular topics. There is a weekly singing assembly for the whole school. Whilst the school has recently adopted a published scheme of work to provide a consistent curriculum across the school, planning does not fully meet pupils' needs, interests, and abilities. Older pupils rightly commented that they would enjoy performing a greater variety of songs in different musical styles.
- The ocarina, recorder, and brass groups give pupils good opportunities to make music together. All pupils take part in the termly concerts which include dance and drama as well as musical performances. There is a basic range of classroom instruments available to support curriculum lessons, including tuned and untuned percussion.
- There is some use of music within information and communication technology (ICT) lessons, but other use of ICT in music is limited. In particular, there is no use of ICT by pupils to record or alter sounds.

### Leadership and management of music

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory with some good features.

- The school's self-evaluation of music is good and you have identified music as an area for development in your school development plan. You rightly recognise the need to increase consistency in the quality of teaching.

- The music coordinator is well-organised and has good subject knowledge. Her great enthusiasm for the subject is acknowledged and appreciated by pupils. With her leave of absence about to start, a key priority is to ensure that pupils continue to enjoy music next year.
- The coordinator has provided training for colleagues in Key Stage 1, but has not been enabled to observe lessons as part of her music management role. Similarly, whilst she is a member of the local music teachers' association, she has not been able to observe or learn from good practice in other schools and has sensibly identified this as an area for her own development.
- Prior to this inspection, the school had not benefited from the wider musical opportunities provided for Key Stage 2 pupils through the Standards Fund and the school was not aware of other national initiatives in music education. However, the school is due to participate in whole-class instrumental tuition in the year 2010-11, and has now registered with the national singing initiative.

#### Subject issues: Data collection and partnerships

- The school has a good relationship with the local authority Music Service which provides pupils with opportunities to receive brass, woodwind, guitar, and drum lessons. However, you recognise that partnerships with your local high schools are not so well-developed.
- You have a system for logging national curriculum levels in music each term for every pupil, but because of inconsistencies in expectations, monitoring and assessment, the usefulness of this data is limited.

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

- ensuring that, during the music coordinator's leave of absence, pupils continue to enjoy music and make progress
- increasing expectations for the standards achieved by pupils by building the musical knowledge and confidence of teachers and teaching assistants and particularly by increasing difficulty and variety of vocal repertoire
- ensuring that a greater proportion of lesson time is spent engaging with music-making, and that weaker ability in literacy or music notation does not hinder musical development
- providing more opportunities for the music coordinator to monitor and guide the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and to share good practice with colleagues in other schools.

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