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Mrs M Silcock
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Silcock

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 18 June 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: observation of lessons, an assembly, instrumental lessons and the choir rehearsal. Discussions were held with members of staff and pupils and relevant documentation was scrutinised.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory. While the school recognises that more needs to be done to improve provision, especially in the classroom, more pupils are enjoying taking part in musical activities. These events are helping to raise the profile of music throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Overall, pupils reach standards which are slightly below expectations and this reflects satisfactory progress given their attainment when they join the school. Pupils make most progress when lessons are planned carefully and there is effective challenge for all pupils.
- Pupils in the choir sing confidently and understand how to adapt their voices for different types of songs. However these skills are not so evident in class singing.
- Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy a range of music activities which help them to recognise instruments and make creative use of sounds.
- Pupils enjoy music and talk enthusiastically about their involvement in musical activities. They gain a great sense of pride when performing to others and benefit from the increasing enrichment of the curriculum which is developing their social skills.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Teachers generally ensure pupils are clear about the activities to be completed in music lessons. However, while pupils know what they are doing, they are less clear about the specific musical skills, knowledge and understanding to be developed.
- Most teachers demonstrate enthusiasm for music and make lessons interesting for the pupils. As a result, relationships are positive, work is valued, pupils want to do their best and their behaviour is good.
- Pupils work well with their teachers and know that they help them to make progress. However, a lack of subject knowledge by some teachers means that inaccuracies are not always identified. The use of inappropriate resources and not giving pupils sufficient time to consider, explain and refine their work, are also limiting the progress made by pupils in some lessons.
- Assessment is underdeveloped as it only records the tasks completed rather than pupils' musical development.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

The overall quality of the curriculum is inadequate.

- The school recognises that the current curriculum does not meet the needs of all pupils and needs urgent modification to reflect the development of pupils' musical skills. There is insufficient opportunity for pupils to develop their creativity in composing tasks.
- At present there is little overall mapping of the curriculum to make certain that all aspects are taught progressively.
- Changes are already in hand to redress this situation and to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of music from other cultures.
- The instruments which have been bought recently are welcomed by both teachers and pupils as the school now has a good range of sound sources for use in lessons.
- Recently more pupils are taking part in musical activities and projects which are often linked with dance and drama. The latest ones have raised the profile of singing especially and resulted in more children wanting to learn instruments. One pupil summed up the current enthusiasm by saying, 'this school has really made me want to learn an instrument'.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are satisfactory.

- You provide drive and enthusiasm for music, together with other arts subjects. The recent audit of music provision which you have done has identified appropriate key areas where provision needs to be improved, most notably in the classrooms. Priorities for action have been identified and you are aware that improvements are needed. Monitoring currently lacks sufficient rigour to provide a clear picture of how pupils' musical skills are being developed
- Assessment is not a consistent part of learning and as a result it not easy to track an individual pupil's progress.
- Senior managers are aware that teachers need to increase their knowledge of the music curriculum so that all members of staff can make the most of music in their lessons and link music effectively to other work.
- Events are specially planned and chosen to extend pupils' understanding of, and involvement in, different musical projects. This means that more pupils are performing regularly. For example, all Year 3 and 4 pupils are practising regularly so that they are ready to provide the opening and closing ceremonies for the school's sports day. A highlight being their effective rendition of the National Anthem.

Subject issues:

Partnership Links

- The school is aware of the vocal/instrumental programmes funded by the Government and hope to take part as soon as possible.

- The Lawton and Goldborn Schools cluster arrangements enable pupils to perform together at local venues in the community.
- Discussions are taking place with the local secondary school so that they are aware of the music activities taking place in this school.

Inclusion

- Inclusion of all learners is central to the philosophy of the school. All arts subjects are valued and, as a result, an increasing number of pupils are getting involved in music activities and learning instruments. Individual pupils have been actively encouraged to get involved.
- However the information about pupils' progress in class is less well established.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the new scheme of work is adapted so that it enables pupils' musical skills to be developed systematically
- developing and using regularly an appropriate method to record the musical progress made by pupils
- helping teachers to increase their knowledge of the music curriculum so that they can make the most of music in their 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