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Mrs J Timlin  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Timlin

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 20 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 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. There are some good aspects of music provision, particularly through partnership work with the Bristol "Sing Up" community and projects with professional artists. These have helped pupils make good progress in their vocal work, in their confidence and self-esteem, and in their understanding of their community. However, composing work and instrumental skills are less well developed and, overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in improving their musical skills and knowledge across the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities.

## Achievement and Standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall with good features.

- In Key Stage 2, standards of singing are in line with national expectations and this represents good progress given the standards and limited musical experience of many when they join the school. Pupils enjoy singing and it increases their confidence and self-esteem. They particularly enjoy singing in the weekly whole-school singing sessions, in the well-attended school choir, and in public performances both in the school and in the local and wider community.
- Pupils make much less progress in composing work and in playing instruments, where standards remain well below national expectations. This is because pupils are not given enough opportunities for this work, and resources are limited. The school has recently acquired a set of steel pans which are being used well with some classes but there are too few instruments for other curriculum work. Pupils are right to want more opportunities to develop their skills across a wider range of instruments.
- Pupils make good progress in their personal development through participation in projects and performances with visiting professional musicians. These events also develop community cohesion and help generate pupils' and parents' pride in their local area. This is a particularly distinctive feature of the school's work.
- No pupils receive additional instrumental tuition in school, and there are no additional regular instrumental ensembles.

## Quality of teaching and learning

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

- Working relationships are good, which enables consistently good behaviour.
- The best teaching has a clear, simple focus on the musical progress that pupils are expected to make. In the one outstanding lesson seen during the inspection, a series of linked activities helped pupils develop their understanding of rhythm, texture, and harmony. Excellent use was made modelling, with the minimum of verbal interruption by the teacher. As a result, pupils made excellent progress. In another lesson, skilful questioning, careful listening, and a focus on small steps of learning helped children to make good progress.
- However, in the majority of lessons, pupils' responses are not challenged sufficiently to help them make more than satisfactory progress. In these lessons, musical learning objectives are not linked precisely enough to the activity and musical vocabulary is not always used correctly.
- Whilst vulnerable pupils are supported well by teaching assistants, no formal assessment processes are used to monitor pupils' progress or help teachers plan the next stage in their learning and set higher challenge and expectation. Recordings are not used to raise standards of work.

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

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

- The school has developed a cross-curricular approach to curriculum planning. Pupils say that music helps them learn in their topic work, for example on the slave trade. However, there is insufficient planning for pupils' progressive acquisition of musical skills and knowledge through Key Stages 1 and 2. Teachers are given links to units from published schemes of work that may be useful to help their planning, and whilst the school ensures music coverage, it does not ensure progression. For example, there is insufficient opportunity for composing.
- There is increasing use of information and communication technology (ICT), particularly in Year 6, both in curriculum time and through an out-of-hours partnership project. Pupils enjoy these experiences but there is insufficient musical focus to this work.
- Provision for singing is good. The weekly whole-school singing session is well-directed by the music coordinator using published resources to increasingly improve pupils' vocal skills. This work is extended through the well-attended school choir. However, there are no opportunities offered for additional instrumental tuition or for regular extra-curricular ensemble work.

## Leadership and management of music

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

- The school's self-evaluation of music is accurate. You are rightly proud of the strong and improved links that you have built with professional artists and the benefits that these links have brought to pupils' singing, their personal development, and community cohesion. You also recognise that there is a need to strengthen the quality of teaching and the music curriculum on a day-to-day basis. These developments show that the school has good capacity to further improve its work in music.
- The music coordinator brings much enthusiasm to the role. Her own subject knowledge and confidence has benefited greatly from working with professional artists and through her involvement with "Sing Up". Teaching ideas are being disseminated to other members of staff. Whilst teachers are very willing to use these ideas with their classes, they do so without sufficient consideration of their appropriateness for their pupils. For example, a similar activity was taught to both Year 1 and Year 4 pupils, without different expectations for their responses.
- Projects with visiting artists are managed well. However, whilst there is some monitoring of teaching and the curriculum, it is not enough to ensure that pupils make consistent progress in music throughout the school.

## Subject issues: Data collection and partnerships

- Partnerships with the Music Service are strong through the “Sing Up!” project. However, the school has not been able to sustain regular additional instrumental tuition for individual pupils or for whole classes.
- Assessment in music is poor. The school does not have any records of pupils’ attainment in music.

## Inclusion

- The school makes every effort to ensure that the opportunities with visiting professionals are not only accessible to all pupils, but also reflect a variety of musical styles.
- A particularly noteworthy aspect of the school’s work is the comprehensive analysis that has been made of participation in extra-curricular activities (including the choir) by gender and ethnicity.

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

- ensuring pupils make consistent progress by planning curriculum activities that are increasingly more musically demanding
- ensuring that pupils have sufficient and regular opportunities to compose and play instruments so they can enjoy the same success in these areas as they do in singing
- providing regular opportunities for more able students to develop their instrumental skills, and use these regularly in ensemble activities.

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 cooperation in this evaluation.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips  
Her Majesty’s Inspector of Schools