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Mrs K A Carlisle
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Carlisle

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 25 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: discussions with members of staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of an assembly and instrumental and class music lessons.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy musicmaking and display great enthusiasm towards practical activities. They make satisfactory progress in the subject but their standards are lower than those normally seen for their age. Teaching of music is generally sound and most teachers are confident in delivering well-planned lessons with a clear musical focus. However, the curriculum does not fully meet the needs of all pupils and resources for the subject are poor. The subject has gone through a period of neglect and is only very recently beginning to get the attention it deserves.

Secure subject leadership displays vision and a commitment to ensuring all aspects of provision improve.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are satisfactory overall.

- Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy musical activities. They use a reasonable range of instruments to recognise and create different sounds. They make their own percussion instruments and use them to perform their own short pieces. As part of their phonics sessions they experience and develop an appropriate awareness of sound.
- Standards, overall, are below national expectations but pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their starting points. Although pupils get increasing opportunities to be musically creative, the standard of performing and composing is lower than that expected nationally.
- Singing is not a regular feature of lessons. When it does occur, such as in assemblies it is of a particularly low tonal quality and lacks accuracy of pitch. However, pupils and staff alike say the quality of singing is improving and is 'much better than last year.'
- A more systematic approach to delivering music is beginning to show signs of raising standards but it is early days yet. Music is used effectively to promote and develop pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills; for example in Christmas concerts and carol services. Pupils value these events and are keen and confident to perform in front of their classmates.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Teachers carefully plan lessons that have an appropriate practical and musical focus. They agree that music has an important part to play in promoting 'excellence and enjoyment.'
- Music lessons typically involve an appropriate range of activities, including performing, composing and listening work. Expectations are appropriate, and the work set is suitably challenging for the majority of pupils.
- Pupils are encouraged to work independently and in small groups and they do this well and with enthusiasm. They are clear about what they are learning and generally know what to do to improve their work.
- Not all teachers consolidate the learning that has taken place at the end of a lesson; limiting pupils' understanding of what they have learned.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in music lessons is a developing feature. A small range of software is used well to add appropriate mood music to picture stories. Pupils speak highly

of this kind of activity. Teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively to engage pupils and demonstrate key learning points. Insufficient use is made of electronic keyboards, largely because the school does not have any and relies on the music coordinator's personal equipment.

- Assessment of music is inconsistent. Although some work is assessed, there is currently no established formal system for assessing pupils' attainment at the end of year or end of key stage.
- The contribution of Local Authority music support staff is satisfactory. Instrumental lessons are appropriately structured, and ensure that pupils generally remain motivated.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- The music curriculum does not ensure that all aspects of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study are delivered. Although there is an appropriate focus on practical musicmaking not enough music actually takes place in a systematic or structured way. Music does not have a high enough profile within the school community. Very few pupils learn musical instruments and singing is underdeveloped.
- Teachers are gaining confidence in using music creatively as part of a cross-curricular approach and as a discrete subject. However, the school's schemes of work lack sufficient focus on vocal work and do not ensure that pupils' skills in vocal and instrumental work are effectively built upon. In addition, the subject is badly under-resourced.
- There are missed opportunities for musical experiences. The morning 'activate' session lacks a sufficient musical focus, such as using action songs to help motivate pupils. There is hardly any reference made to music from non-western cultures and this restricts pupils' spiritual, social and cultural understanding.
- The music curriculum is enriched through a small number of external visitors. For example, a music trio workshop and local high school music groups.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are satisfactory.

- The music coordinator has a clear vision for music in the school, and her enthusiasm is conveyed successfully to the pupils and staff. She is appropriately supported by the headteacher who shares the commitment to improve the subject.
- Until recently, music has not been adequately managed and consequently it is not as developed as other subjects. The recently appointed coordinator has quickly established a clear direction for the

subject but has not yet had enough time to fully implement all the necessary initiatives to raise standards.

- While some monitoring of provision and tracking of teaching and pupils' progress and is undertaken, this is on an informal basis. The school is working to refine and standardise the way all teachers assess pupils' work in order to identify their musical ability and track their individual progress but this is at a very early stage.
- Action planning is satisfactory. The headteacher and music coordinator have accurately identified priorities for development and are striving to further improve the quality of resources, teaching and learning, and the curriculum.

Subject issue:

Partnership Links

- Links with the local music service are satisfactory and contribute adequately to the quality of music provision. Visiting teachers make an important contribution to the musical life of the school, and the few pupils who receive lessons enjoy performing in ensembles and in assemblies.
- The school has had no involvement in the instrumental and/or vocal programmes funded by the Government. However, plans are in place for this to be introduced for all Key Stage 2 pupils from next September.
- The school is working hard at establishing effective links within the local community.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards of music throughout the school and in particular the quality of singing
- improving the quality of the music curriculum so that all aspects are delivered and sufficiently resourced to allow pupils to experience a highly practical, musical education
- developing and implementing a more formal system for assessing pupils' progress and monitoring the quality of music teaching

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

Anthony Briggs
Additional Inspector