

10 November 2008

Ms J Bruce  
Headteacher  
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Watford  
Hertfordshire  
WD24 6ST

Dear Ms Bruce

### Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on the 20 October 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, singing assembly, observation of lessons and the choir rehearsal.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory. Pupils make good progress through the whole-class recorder tuition but less challenge in other music lessons and in singing activities means that pupils make satisfactory progress overall.

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are satisfactory.

- When they start in Reception, children's musical development is less advanced than that expected for their age. By the end of Key Stage 2, while progress has been made, the standards of work remain below average expectations. This represents satisfactory achievement given their starting points.

- Pupils' make most progress when playing instruments. Less progress is made in singing and much less in creating musical ideas.
- All pupils learn to play the recorder through whole-class instrumental teaching; an approach established by this school before the national initiative. However, there are no other opportunities in the school for pupils to learn to play other instruments.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Most lessons include music-making activities with clear learning objectives, and working relationships are always positive. Teaching assistants give good support to pupils who find learning and participation difficult. As a result, pupils enjoy their music lessons. However, pupils' progress remains satisfactory because class teachers do not always challenge the quality of pupils' work sufficiently. Whilst pupils participate enthusiastically in the tasks set, their first efforts are accepted and often praised too highly. Mistakes are not corrected enough, and pupils are not always shown how to improve their work. Class teachers also lack confidence and expertise in knowing how to structure composing and improvising activities.
- Learning is better in whole-class recorder lessons. Singing and listening games are used well to help pupils understand pitch and rhythm patterns, which they then play on the recorder. However, the school recognises that more needs to be done to stretch the more able. Opportunities are also missed for pupils to use their specialist instrumental skills when they are in Years 5 and 6. The school is only just finding out that some pupils learn to play different instruments out of school.

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

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

- The published scheme of work used throughout the school by class teachers enables the curriculum to meet statutory requirements and helps lessons to be planned appropriately and focussed on musical activity. However, there is insufficient adaptation of this scheme to ensure more able pupils are stretched sufficiently.
- Pupils appreciate the opportunities to hear different styles of music, such as the steel band that visited recently. Pupils also enjoy singing in class and in the singing assemblies, but they are right when they say that they would like to sing a greater variety of songs.
- The whole-class recorder tuition provides good opportunities for all pupils to gain experience of learning to play an instrument. However, there are no opportunities for pupils to learn other orchestral instruments.

## Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are satisfactory.

- At the time of the inspection, the music co-ordinator had only been in post for a few weeks. Previously, you had taken responsibility for music. You both understand that, for standards to improve further, there should be higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and, in particular, there should be greater challenge for the more able pupils. Whilst it is good that class teachers participate in the additional whole-class recorder sessions, they would benefit from training and further professional development in music.
- You and the music coordinator have a realistic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of music provision in your school.

## Subject Issues

### Partnership Links

- The school has purchased whole-class recorder tuition from the music service for a number of years. It has not received any of the extra funding provided by the Government for instrumental teaching.

### Inclusion

- Inclusion in music is satisfactory. Good features include the involvement of all pupils in recorder tuition, and the support given in class lessons to those who find participation difficult. However, not enough boys are involved in extra-curricular activities, and the talents and abilities of more able students are not developed sufficiently.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that all teachers challenge the standards of pupils' work rigorously so they make good progress in all aspects of their musical development
- ensuring that teachers know how to provide appropriate guidance and support for pupils' creative work
- increasing the involvement of all pupils, and particularly boys, in extra-curricular activities
- increasing the range of additional instrumental tuition.

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

Mark Phillips  
Her Majesty's Inspector