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Mrs C Crabtree
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Crabtree

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 13 November 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, discussions with the Music Service, scrutiny of relevant documentation, scrutiny of audio recordings, and observation of lessons and the choir rehearsal.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory. The school provides a good music curriculum, including good resources for whole-class teaching, a good range of instrumental tuition, and regular singing opportunities. However, pupils' progress is satisfactory overall because the quality of music teaching is inconsistent and pupils are not always challenged sufficiently to reach higher standards.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are satisfactory.

- Children's musical development and experience when they start school is varied. Most are able to keep a steady beat in time to music and show good understanding of the differences between high and low pitches, but some are much less confident. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are similarly varied. Whilst a small number achieve good standards through their additional instrumental work, most pupils achieve standards that are broadly average to below average. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress.
- The number of children learning to play a musical instrument is broadly satisfactory. All children learn music through the recorder in Year 3, as part of the wider opportunities project, but the proportions continuing with tuition following this experience are low. Increasing numbers sing with the school choir and play in the recorder group, but participation rates remain satisfactory with more girls than boys involved.
- Those that do continue with instrumental tuition generally make good progress and enjoy their lessons. Pupils also enjoy the weekly singing assemblies. They sing with enthusiasm, good diction and intonation, although there is not enough two-part singing.
- The school recognises that there are insufficient opportunities for children to develop their creativity through music.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- There are examples of good teaching that enable pupils to make good progress. In a wider opportunities lesson, there was a constant focus on music-making with the teacher skilfully developing children's rhythmic and melodic awareness through singing and rhythm exercises. Mistakes were always corrected effectively through expert musical modelling by the teacher. Pupils were starting to understand notation by relating simple written patterns to rhythms that they had already learnt by ear.
- Class teachers have good generic teaching skills; lessons are well-planned and working relationships are always positive. However, too often there is insufficient emphasis on pupil's musical development because teachers do not have high enough expectations of the standards that can be achieved. Simply completing the lesson task is not sufficient to ensure pupils make musical progress.
- In some lessons, there is not enough focus on music-making, with greater emphasis on other skills such as literacy. The school is

considering developing a creative curriculum model, with cross-curricular working and recognises the need to ensure that high expectations for musical quality, as well as activity, are built into the planning for these projects.

- A good feature of teaching is the use of audio recordings which enable pupils to listen to and appraise their work. However, not enough use is made of information and communication technology either by teachers, or by pupils in Key Stage 2.
- Teaching assistants are managed well, particularly to support pupils who might otherwise find it difficult to participate in class activities.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- All classes have a weekly music lesson. Published schemes of work provide appropriate frameworks and support for class teachers, and ensure that there is consistency of curriculum content across the school.
- Additional weekly singing sessions are led by the music coordinator and yourself, with the support of all staff. The whole-class instrumental teaching programme in Year 3 is well thought-through and places a very clear focus on developing pupils' musical skills, awareness and understanding.
- There is a good range of specialist instrumental tuition provided by the Music Service. A dedicated, spacious music room, with a good selection of classroom instruments, is available for curriculum work.
- The choir is led enthusiastically by the music coordinator and a teaching assistant. There is a small recorder group, and annual productions that involve the whole school.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are satisfactory.

- The subject coordinator provides good musical leadership, particularly in singing and recorder work. Good support is given by senior leaders and there is a clear desire to improve pupils' creativity. However, expectations for participation rates and the quality of pupils' work are not sufficiently ambitious.
- Whilst there are good resources to help class teachers provide satisfactory lessons, there is not enough monitoring and mentoring of music teaching and learning across the school to help them improve further.
- The school is not yet involved in any national initiatives such as the Sing Up campaign.

Subject Issues

Partnership Links

- The school has well-established links with the Music Service to provide the wider opportunities programme in Year 3 and other instrumental tuition. However, there are no curriculum links with the high school.

Inclusion

- All children are able to access instrumental tuition and the low cost of lessons and, together with the remissions policy and free instrument loan, remove potential barriers to participation. However, the school recognises that not enough is done to promote the benefits of continuing musical tuition to parents or to better identify pupils who show particular aptitude or need to get involved.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- building on teachers' good general teaching skills by raising expectations for the standard of pupils' music-making
- ensuring that the good progress made by pupils through the wider opportunities programme in Year 3 is continued throughout Key Stage 2
- increasing the proportions of pupils involved in extra-curricular activities and additional instrumental tuition, particularly boys.

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