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Mr D Ramjee
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Dear Mr Ramjee

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on the 04-05 February 2009. 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 student is benefiting from your music provision. It also explored the 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of music is good. The recently appointed subject leader has quickly and effectively focused the work of the department so that it motivates and engages students. Although standards have been low in recent years, students are now making good progress and standards are now broadly in line with national expectations.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are good.

- Standards in Key Stage 4 overall are broadly similar to national averages, although there is a wide range of attainment. Students make good progress, often from their below average starting points when they began the course. The proportion of students involved in GCSE courses in recent years has been very low but numbers are now increasing significantly. The recent introduction of a BTEC course alongside the GCSE course is encouraging more students with differing interests to study music in Key Stage 4. Approximately a quarter of the students in Year 10 are following a music course.
- In Key Stage 3, students make good progress from below average starting points. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are average overall, with a few students attaining high standards. Students' understanding is seen clearly in their work in composing. For example, students in Year 9 demonstrate good understanding in compositions which combine Indian and Western European musical traditions.
- Students have positive attitudes to music and enjoy being actively involved. They cooperate well with each other, develop self-confidence and are becoming increasingly independent learners.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teaching is lively and engages students directly in musical activities which allow them to develop their musical understanding through first-hand experience. Lessons have a clear sense of purpose and, as a result, students concentrate well on the tasks they undertake. Relationships between teachers and students are very positive and students are encouraged and challenged to achieve well.
- Lessons have a strong emphasis on an aural approach which encourages students to listen carefully and, in most cases, to respond musically. The effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) allows students to develop their skills to create imaginative and well-constructed compositions.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- The curriculum for Key Stage 3 is in the process of being re-drafted in response to national initiatives and to meet the needs and interests of students. Because the process is not yet complete, the sense of progression across and within year groups is not yet explicit. The newly

completed units in Key Stage 3 include a good variety of different styles and genres and, among other activities, a very strong emphasis on the progressive development of ICT skills. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 has been appropriately enhanced through the introduction of a BTEC course alongside the GCSE course.

- The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, including Rockschoool ensembles and instrumental lessons which provide additional opportunities for students to build on their learning. Students are actively encouraged to perform both within school and in the wider community. There are fewer opportunities for students to take part in larger ensembles, such as samba bands or African drumming groups which would provide additional opportunities for students, including some who are not currently involved in activities beyond the classroom.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good overall.

- The school has a clear vision for music and a determination to provide well for its students. Significant improvements in the quality of provision and resources have been made, including a significant investment in ICT resources for music. These developments are having a positive impact on students' enjoyment, attitudes and achievements in music lessons and in the significantly increased take up of music in Key Stage 4.
- The school has accurately identified other appropriate areas for development. These include increasing students' involvement in instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities, and strengthening the links between classroom and instrumental teachers.
- The school has effective partnerships with external providers including the local authority music service, some of its feeder schools and other providers. The subject leader has begun to play a key role in developing the confidence of teachers in primary schools and this has been recognised as an area for further development.

Subject issue:

Inclusion

- The school has taken decisive action to ensure that music is accessible to all students. Classroom activities motivate students, as a result of which they are fully engaged in their learning. A good proportion of students are now opting to continue their study of music on Key Stage 4 where the range of options has been expanded to ensure that courses provide well for students' differing needs and interests.
- Information about students' interests and previous involvement in music making is identified when they enter the school. The initial units of work in Year 7 are used to enable students to show what they are able to do in music. However, they are not used systematically to identify and record

students' attainment against national curriculum levels. Targets for attainment at the end of the key stage are therefore not informed by this information.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continuing to develop the schemes of work for music, ensuring that they identify progression for students of different abilities both within each unit of work and across key stages
- using information gained from assessing students' standards on entry to the school as the basis of planning subsequent work and for informing targets for the end of the key stage
- broadening the range of extra-curricular activities in order to engage and involve more students.

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

David Williams
Additional Inspector