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Mrs A McKeown
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs McKeown

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on the 26 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 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 and observations of lessons and assemblies.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory. During the absence of the subject leader, on maternity leave, the headteacher with other members of the senior team have assumed overall responsibility for leading and managing the music provision. They recognise areas that still need to be improved such as ensuring that all pupils have equal access to music events and concerts. The regular performance opportunities provided for pupils make a good contribution to developing their self-esteem and confidence.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are satisfactory.

- Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy music activities, especially using the range of outdoor musical instruments to create and recognise different sounds. They make satisfactory progress overall from their average starting points.
- Pupils receive music lessons regularly in Key Stage 1 where they enjoy a well balanced mixture of activities, including singing. Some pupils very confidently participate in lessons showing a good understanding of pitch and rhythm.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils attain standards broadly similar to those expected and progress overall is satisfactory. Pupils understand the meaning of different music terms and can demonstrate musical ideas but their progress in developing these is at times uneven, due to the lack of regular music lessons.
- Singing does not feature regularly in lessons in Key Stage 2. However pupils' sing with enthusiasm and their use of pitch and dynamics are generally accurate.
- Almost one third of all pupils learn to play instruments both in and out of school time. Older pupils rightly say that they would welcome more opportunities to play in ensembles. The school is aware of this and has successfully introduced an ocarina group which is welcomed by pupils and parents alike.
- Pupils' personal development in music is good and they generally enjoy their lessons. Music is used well to promote pupils' social and cultural awareness, for example through school concerts, assemblies and the chance to perform at venues in the city. Pupils also enjoy taking part in workshops in school where they learn about music from other countries.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Teaching is satisfactory and most teachers are confident to deliver lessons with a clear musical focus. Good classroom management skills help to engage and motivate pupils leading to their generally good behaviour in lessons. They cooperate and collaborate well with each other, both in whole class and small group work.
- In the best lessons, especially when pupils are enabled to work in small groups, they are given the opportunity to predict sounds and work things out for themselves musically. Pupils are clear about what they are learning and generally understand how to improve their work. Less effective lessons do not provide enough opportunity for pupils to use musical examples in response to their teachers' questions.

- At present there is insufficient opportunity for those pupils who have instrumental lessons to use their instruments in music lessons.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in music lessons is a developing feature and pupils are beginning to learn, for example, how to add sounds to pictures and the poems they have written.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- The school uses a commercial scheme of work to ensure curriculum coverage across the school is in line with national requirements. Teachers do generally adapt activities within the scheme to meet the needs, interests and abilities of the pupils in their class. However, as pupils do not practice and develop their musical skills on a regular basis because lessons do not take place every week, especially in Key Stage 2, they make no better than satisfactory progress.
- Teachers are gaining confidence in using music creatively as part of a cross curricular approach where music is used to support other learning, for example in literacy and numeracy lessons. However some teachers have yet to ensure that music is taught as a discrete subject and not always used to support other subjects.
- The music curriculum is enriched through a number of workshops run by visiting musicians. The school also arranges for pupils to take part in productions which incorporate music with other arts subjects. Pupils welcome these events and rightly express the wish to see more of them. A number of ensembles are developing and the school has plans to provide others later in the year.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are satisfactory

- Discussions during the inspection showed that the staff responsible for leading and managing music have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve provision further. Enabling all pupils to be involved in music making is central to the philosophy of the school and this is clearly demonstrated through the involvement of pupils in assemblies and concerts where they perform successfully.
- The school is making every effort to be involved in the instrumental and/or vocal programmes funded by the Government. Plans are well established to offer whole class tuition to pupils in both key stages; however the limitations of accommodation impact adversely on these plans. Recently the school has registered for the Sing Up programme; however it is too early to judge the impact of this on the quality of singing. Nevertheless there is a willingness to embrace opportunities,

especially with the local secondary school, in order to promote further improvement.

Subject issue: Partnership Links

- Links with the local music service are strong and contribute well to the quality of music provision. Visiting teachers make an important contribution to the musical life of the school despite difficulties at times finding suitable teaching rooms for them.
- There are developing links through arts events with the local secondary school and the school has appropriate plans to develop these further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that music lessons are taught regularly so that all pupils can practice and develop their musical skills frequently
- improving the quality and frequency of singing, especially for pupils in Key Stage 2
- explore ways to increase the opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular ensembles.

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

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector