

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Miss R Beal
Acting Headteacher
Escrick CofE VC Primary School
Carr Lane
Escrick
York
North Yorkshire
YO19 6JQ

Dear Miss Beal

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on the 12 March 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, observations of lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of music is good. Good teaching enables pupils to make good progress in lessons, develop confident performing skills and the ability to direct and lead ensembles. Pupils are well motivated and music makes a strong contribution to developing their self-esteem and confidence.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are good.

- Children in the Foundation Stage sing confidently and explore different sounds made by musical instruments. They respond well in music sessions, follow musical instructions accurately and make good progress from their broadly average starting points.
- Pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 make good progress and attain standards that are above national expectations, especially when creating and developing their compositions.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 confidently maintained a regular beat and many accurately played a well known tune when accompanying the rest of the group who were singing. Others were supportive in their comments and constructive when identifying how the performance could be improved.
- Singing is developed well as a regular part of music lessons. However during whole school singing, progress is not as rapid because pupils do not always practice the different parts that they find difficult.
- Almost one third of all pupils learn to play instruments both in and out of school. Although there are annual public performances both in school and in the wider community, not all extra-curricular activities run throughout the year which limits the amount of progress pupils can make in these ensembles.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- All classes, apart from those in the Foundation Stage, are taught by the subject leader, who is a specialist. Teaching assistants are actively involved in lessons, often monitoring progress or working with small groups of pupils. As a result they are developing their understanding of effective strategies for teaching music.
- Positive relationships and good collaboration between pupils and adults establish a climate where pupils are keen to learn and to do well.
- Lessons constantly focus on involving pupils in practical music making. This means that they listen carefully and learn how to internalise sounds, for example, predicting the pitch of well know songs before singing and playing them together. Occasionally teachers do not allow sufficient time for pupils to respond or demonstrate musically their understanding of what they have learnt.
- Audio recordings of pupils' work are made usually at the end of each piece of work; however the school recognises that more regular recording is needed to help pupils understand how to improve their work during lessons.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

The overall quality of the curriculum is good.

- The classroom curriculum, including that for the Foundation Stage, is well matched to meet the needs of all pupils. Careful planning ensures that musical activities and pupils' understanding are developed systematically. The school recognises however that further development and modification is necessary to broaden the types of notation used in lessons.
- Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) in music lessons where they learn how to use different programs in order to explore sounds and symbols.
- Class teachers work closely with the subject leader in order to include music with other subjects and to ensure that the skills pupils learn in music lessons are practiced appropriately.
- The school is right in identifying the need to expand the range of opportunities for pupils beyond the classroom especially in respect to those that occur on a regular basis across the year.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good.

- The school's self-evaluation identifies clear priorities for improving further the music provision and how this will be achieved. Music is an important subject for all staff and careful training has been undertaken to improve and develop teachers' musical skills. More is planned, especially to improve their confidence when teaching singing.
- Further developments, including whole class instrumental teaching as part of the programme funded by the Government, will start from next September.
- The school demonstrates a willingness to embrace opportunities for pupils to work with others, for example at another school in the village, in order to take part in arts activities and musical performances.
- Monitoring of provision takes place and this has led to the school recognising that the current assessment methods need to be shared with pupils so they can understand how to improve their work.

Subject issues: Partnership Links

- There are strong links with the local authority music service, church and the local village. The school recognises that there is scope to develop its links with secondary schools.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing and expanding pupils' knowledge of different ways to notate music
- ensuring pupils always know how to make improvements to their work
- finding ways to provide more regular additional extra-curricular activities.

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