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25 June 2009

Ms J Kalra
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Kalra

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 19 May 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 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of lessons, a lunch-time activity and performances by three Year 6 pupils.

The overall effectiveness of music is good with strengths in the way class teachers have been fully involved in the wider opportunities instrumental programme and the strong emphasis on helping all pupils experience and enjoy playing music together. Singing is also rightly at the heart of the school's music provision.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are good.

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well given their starting points. They have good instrumental and ensemble skills and perform confidently together. The Year 2 class repeated rhythmic patterns accurately and pupils in Year 4 responded well to a creative task making effective use of the drumming skills they have acquired in the wider opportunities programme. The three Year 6 pupils also performed very well on the violin. However, pupils' knowledge of musical vocabulary is less well developed across the school. For example, while children in the Foundation Stage enjoyed making sounds they did not always explore how the sounds could be changed and so opportunities to develop understanding of musical terms such as louder and quieter were sometimes missed.
- Singing is good overall. In the Year 3/4 session pupils made rapid progress and learned a new song very quickly and sang musically together. Pupils in Key Stage 1 have good awareness of pitch and most are able to sing in tune.
- Pupils are involved well in school music events and some pupils are involved in additional regular music experiences such as a lunch-time choir, recorder group and Indian dance club.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Lessons are managed well and teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together supporting each other and taking the lead as appropriate. Pupils are also given the opportunity to lead work. For example, pupils led the singing warm-ups excellently in the Year 3/4 lesson.
- There is an appropriate emphasis on practical music making and the use of 'real' instruments such as Djembe drums, violins and cellos. Good use is also being made of video and pupils are increasingly being encouraged to look and listen closely to what they have done so they can identify how they can improve their work.
- In the best lessons, pupils are engaged and helped to make rapid progress through high expectations and progressively challenging activities. However, progress was less in the lessons where links between tasks were not as strong. While pupils were generally clear about what they are learning, opportunities were missed to ensure they all had something to aim for – so they did not always know what would make an even better response. Extra support was also not always provided for pupils who were finding the work more difficult, such as those who have yet to find their singing voice.

- The instrumental sessions led by visiting specialist teachers from the music service have had a clear impact on the quality of teaching. Class teachers not only make good use of the strategies used in these lessons but also extend them by applying their understanding of how children learn.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- The curriculum includes excellent opportunities for all pupils to learn to play 'real' instruments together as a whole class. Each instrumental programme now lasts for two years so pupils are given appropriate amount of time to really discover their instrumental skills and decide whether they wish to continue to play a musical instrument at the end of the programme.
- Singing is an integral part of the music provision and singing sessions extend the time allocated to music in Key Stage 2. Good use is made of the singing repertoire developed by the national initiative Sing-Up.
- While the instrumental programmes enable pupils to respond creatively and explore different kinds of music there is insufficient detail in the scheme of work about what musical progression is expected within and across all years.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to perform to parents and there are some extra-curricular activities. However, understandably, pupils would like more regular extra-curricular activities and the school is exploring ways that this can be achieved, in particular how to help pupils practise playing the violin and cello between the weekly sessions.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good.

- You have given good support to the development of the music provision, making the most of recent initiatives and working closely with the music service. The encouraging of staff to be fully involved in the instrumental programmes is particularly effective as this has meant that teachers have been able to develop their confidence in teaching music. The role of the class teachers in supporting and helping to improve the quality of these sessions is also significant and the school recognises that this could be extended even further. Good support is also given to the music co-ordinator so she can attend courses with the teaching assistant who teaches music in Key Stage 1.
- Music is led well and there is a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for further improvement. For example, the school is aware of the need to provide the subject co-ordinator with more time to monitor the music provision across the school so that there is greater understanding of musical progression within and across all the different musical experiences.

Subject issue: Inclusion

- All pupils feel involved in music and enjoy the opportunities provided. The school is aware of the need to find more ways to enable pupils to develop their musical interests and aptitudes through more regular extra-curricular activities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- revising the scheme of work to give more detail about progression within and across all the musical experiences and opportunities
- ensuring that pupils always have 'something to aim for' in all lessons so that pupils know what to do to improve their work and that pupils who are finding the work more difficult are given the support they need to make more musical progress
- find ways to increase the range of regular extra-curricular activities including providing opportunities for pupils to practise between instrumental sessions.

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

Anthony Knight
Her Majesty's Inspector