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Mrs A Whitehead
Headteacher
St Mark's C of E Primary School
Redhouse Lane
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Dear Mrs Whitehead

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 01 July 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: observation of lessons, an assembly and extra-curricular ensembles; scrutiny of relevant documentation and pupils' work. Discussions were also held with members of staff and pupils.

The overall effectiveness of music is good. Reflective and thoughtful leadership and excellent partnerships ensure that all pupils benefit significantly from the extended range of musical activities and performance opportunities provided for them.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are good.

- Children's musical development and experience when they start school is generally less advanced than that expected for their age. Through a well planned range of music songs and games, they make good progress.
- This rate of progress continues as pupils move through the school but is less rapid in Years 5 and 6. Overall standards are in line with that expected nationally.
- Pupils make best progress in playing instruments, particularly during the whole class instrumental tuition which is provided for several year groups. Although singing is a regular feature of music lessons, pupils generally make less progress in this aspect of music.
- Pupils benefit significantly from taking part in the extended range of music events. They experience live music performances, for example the recent trip to the Bridgewater Hall where comments such as 'an amazing experience' and 'I loved every minute of it', summed up their enjoyment.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Good relationships in lessons enable pupils to demonstrate and develop consistently good behaviour and positive attitudes.
- The best lessons include a good range of linked music-making activities and ensure that the pupils always know what they are learning. Short activities, good modelling from the teachers and time for pupils to consider their answers are also key features that enable good progress to be made.
- However, these effective teaching strategies are not used in all lessons and the school recognises that more use could be made of audio recordings so that pupils can recognise and learn how to improve their work.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- Pupils benefit significantly from a very wide range of musical opportunities both in the classroom and through events such as the music week and whole-class instrumental teaching. However class music lessons do not feature as regularly as pupils get older which affects the rate of their musical progress.
- The scheme of work is detailed with the emphasis placed on the performing aspect of music making. This has ensured that pupils are

keen to be involved in music making and to perform regularly both in school and within the wider community. The school recognises the need to ensure an appropriate balance of different learning experiences, including providing more opportunities for creative work for the older pupils.

- The enrichment programme during music week enables pupils to experience different styles of music, however music from other cultures is under-represented.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good.

- Music has a very high priority in the school and leaders monitor carefully the subject's impact on all pupils, including those who are vulnerable or find learning instruments challenging. The school clearly demonstrates commitment to the subject through providing additional curriculum time for whole-class instrumental tuition and a range of performance opportunities and giving financial support to music activities.
- Regular evaluations, which include the gathering of responses from staff and pupils to the recent music week, demonstrate your commitment to reflective practice and a desire to provide the best possible music experiences for all learners.
- You recognise that the quality of teaching and learning varies across the school and have targeted support and provided well-chosen external courses to share and promote good practice.
- Partnerships with many different organisations are exceptionally strong enabling pupils to perform at, and visit, many different venues.

Inclusion

- Pupils' talent is recognised and opportunities are provided for this to be nurtured and celebrated. They are encouraged to attend music clubs and events out of lesson time with financial and emotional support provided if needed.
- Pupils' involvement in instrumental lessons and additional activities is thoroughly monitored so that all groups are represented.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:-

- improving pupils' understanding of music from other cultures
- continuing to increase consistency in the quality of teaching across all classes and ensuring an appropriate balance of different learning experiences for all pupils.

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