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Mr A Holland  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Holland

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 08-09 July 2009. At the end of the inspection I fed back my judgements and this letter is to confirm my findings.

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 recordings, observation of class lessons, choir and orchestra rehearsals, and school assembly.

The overall effectiveness of music is good in all respects. There are particularly good partnerships with local community musicians. Leadership and management of music are good, enabling music to remain effective whilst the music coordinator is on maternity leave.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are good.

- The quality of children's creative play and musical experience in the Early Years is slightly below that expected for their ages. However, by the end of Key Stage 2, standards are firmly in line with expectations.

During their time at the school, they make good progress in developing musical understanding. They sing confidently in two parts with good intonation and diction, and they show imagination and control in composing work.

- The proportion of pupils learning to play an instrument is very good. Half of all pupils in Key Stage 2 receive additional tuition, most of these in school, and even more take part in extra-curricular activities. A few Key Stage 1 pupils have started to learn instruments, but at present there are no musical groups for them to sing or play in.
- There is a popular school choir and a thriving school orchestra. These groups participate regularly in local events and festivals and do much for the personal development and self-esteem of the pupils involved, as well as doing a great deal for the school's contribution to the community.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Most lessons are planned with clear musical learning objectives. In these lessons, there is a constant emphasis on pupils' musical participation and enjoyment. For example, in a Year 1 lesson that was taught on the school playground, children participated in singing games that developed their vocal skills, and sense of pulse and rhythm through movement. Their music-making was non-stop, and so was the teacher's constant challenge to improve. Most teachers model work confidently for pupils. In the lessons where teaching is less effective, too much time is spent explaining verbally rather than demonstrating musically.
- In most lessons, pupils with particular instrumental skills are encouraged to use this experience to enhance group work. Teaching assistants work hard to encourage those who find learning difficult, but often this help can be a barrier to successful participation as, like the least successful teaching, they rely on words or musical notation rather than modelling and demonstrating music itself.
- Whilst teachers have good understanding of individual pupils' music strengths and weaknesses, formal assessment is at an early stage. Better use could be made of assessment to help teachers plan even more challenging lessons. Similarly, insufficient use is made of recordings to help pupils enjoy and appraise their own work.

### Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- The curriculum is based on a published scheme of work, which is adapted and planned thoroughly by the music co-ordinator and class teachers. It ensures that all requirements are covered, although there could be more emphasis on singing throughout Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, projects are organised within a two-year rolling programme. While there is sufficient breadth of musical styles within these projects,

there is less planning for the depth of musical response expected from pupils of different ages or abilities.

- There is a good range of instrumental tuition available on flute, saxophone, clarinet, guitar, keyboards and violin. However, the school does not benefit from the whole-class instrumental teaching programme and you rightly recognise that this approach could usefully complement the existing instrumental programme by offering popular or world music styles.
- There are particularly good extra-curricular musical opportunities through the choir and orchestra, which are both well-supported, although twice as many girls than boys attend these groups.
- There is a dedicated music room, and good facilities for sound projection and recording in the main hall. There is an adequate range of instruments to support classroom work, although some of these would benefit from refurbishment or replacement.

### Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good.

- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and recognises what needs to be done to help pupils make even better progress. You place high value on music for individual pupils and the school as a whole. This vision is directed well in practice by the music coordinator. Classroom lessons, instrumental tuition and ensembles are well-organised. It is also commendable that such good arrangements are in place to ensure continuity of provision during the music coordinator's maternity leave, showing the depth of musical confidence amongst your staff and the school's good community partnerships.
- The music coordinator and other teaching staff have made good use of some professional development opportunities, including the national singing strategy materials.

### Subject Issues

#### Partnership Links

- Partnership links are very strong. Peripatetic teachers from the local authority music service provide some of the instrumental teaching, although the school has yet to benefit from the wider opportunities programme provided through the Standards Funding by the local authority. There are good links with the annual Upton Jazz and Blues Festivals, which have generously provided additional resources for the school as well as opportunities for the orchestra to perform. During the music coordinator's absence, the local church choirmaster is helping with the school choir, and teachers from the local secondary school are leading the weekly orchestra rehearsals.

## Inclusion

- The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who receive additional instrumental tuition is exactly the same as the overall proportion, and this is a particularly noteworthy strength. However, in comparison, very few pupils in receipt of free school meals have taken up an instrument. While there is a bursary scheme to cover part of the cost of lessons provided by the local authority, there is no remissions scheme for lessons organised by the school and the school acknowledges that this is an issue that should be considered by governors.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- reviewing the class music curriculum with a greater emphasis on singing in Key Stage 1, and placing more emphasis on the depth of pupils' responses in Key Stage 2
- developing the use of assessment to plan more challenging lessons, and making better use of audio recordings to help pupils assess their own work
- involving teaching assistants in professional development activities, to ensure more effective musical support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in class lessons.

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

Mark Phillips  
Her Majesty's Inspector