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Mrs A Rix
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Dear Mrs Rix

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme – Music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 28 and 29 September 2009 to look at work in music.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of music, the visit had a particular focus on the extent to which all pupils are benefiting from the provision. I also explored the partnerships you have developed with other schools and agencies to improve continuity and increase opportunity for your pupils.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of three lessons; and a performance by the 'Pantastique' steel pans group.

The overall effectiveness of music was satisfactory. Music is important to the school and much enthusiasm is shown by those involved in leading and managing the subject. Pupils value highly the opportunities to be involved in music activities. However, inconsistencies in teaching mean that not all pupils are challenged to make as much progress as they could.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- When children join the Early Years Foundation Stage, they have limited experience of singing and using instruments. By the end of Year 6, pupils attain standards that are broadly similar to those expected nationally.
- When pupils are suitably challenged in lessons and the work builds on their previous learning and understanding, they make good progress. However, because of inconsistencies in teaching, progress is satisfactory overall.
- A much higher proportion of girls than boys is involved in instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities.
- Music contributes significantly to pupils' social development. When they take the lead in lessons, they rise ably to the challenge. Performing for different audiences and with other pupils also helps to develop their self-confidence well.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching of music is satisfactory.

- The best teaching has a clear, simple focus on the musical progress pupils are expected to make. Challenge is well-matched to the needs of individual pupils and good records are kept which are used successfully to inform the next stage of learning. Musical skills are developed systematically and pupils are given time to explain and demonstrate their musical understanding.
- However, these features are not consistent in all lessons. Activities are not always matched to pupils' needs. Some lessons are over-directed by teachers and pupils are not given enough time to develop and rehearse their ideas. Insufficient use is made of audio recordings so that pupils can listen to and improve their compositions.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- You and other senior leaders recognise that some teachers are more successful than others in adapting the commercial scheme of work you use to meet the needs, interests and abilities of all pupils. As a result, the approach to pupils' progressive acquisition of musical skills and knowledge is inconsistent.
- Class music activities are complemented by additional singing lessons, enrichment clubs and performances. The 'Pantastique' steel pans group is very popular and, together with the choir, performs regularly in school and for members of the local community.
- The range of music pupils listen to, for example in assembly, is limited. Pupils would welcome exploring different styles of music in more depth.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- You and other senior leaders have made good use of Ofsted's recent music report to help you to judge the overall quality of music provision. However, monitoring focuses largely on what the school provides rather than on specific musical outcomes. You recognise the need to improve teaching, and the curriculum offered, so that pupils can develop and improve their musical skills progressively. Nevertheless, the school celebrates the benefits music brings in developing pupils' creativity, self-confidence and their understanding of community cohesion.
- All those involved in leading and managing music bring much enthusiasm to their roles. They value the subject and ensure it is well-resourced, recognising, however, that the use of computer programs is underdeveloped.

Subject issue – Inclusion

- You and senior leaders recognise that music is an important subject in the development of the whole child. As a result, you ensure that all pupils are involved in productions and concerts. However, you are aware of the need to find ways to involve more boys in instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities.

Subject issue – Partnerships

- The school is actively exploring ways to work with a federation of local primary schools and a secondary school to share good practice and provide opportunities for pupils to work and perform together. Currently, though, links with other secondary schools are underdeveloped.
- The school is yet to benefit from the instrumental and/or vocal programme funded by the Government and provided by the local music service.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that pupils make good or better musical progress by:
 - planning more challenging lessons that take better account of pupils' prior musical skills and understanding
 - making effective and consistent use of assessment
 - using audio recording to help pupils evaluate their work and understand what they can do to make their music even better
- investigating ways to increase boys' participation in additional instrumental tuition and extra-curricular activities.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop music in the 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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector