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27 October 2009

Mrs J Stanley-Bell
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Stanley-Bell

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 and 13 October 2009, to look at work in music.

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 all pupils are benefiting from the provision. I also explored the partnerships you may 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 made included: interviews with the headteacher and the special needs coordinator; a meeting with selected pupils; observation of eight lessons and the singing assembly; and scrutiny of relevant documentation including the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils.

The overall effectiveness of music was judged to be satisfactory. Recognising previous inadequacies, the school has embraced the whole-class instrumental teaching programme, the national singing strategy, and Ofsted's recent music report. Provision and pupils' progress are now satisfactory overall. However, there is much more to be done in all areas of pupils' musical experience, particularly in singing, before achievement can be judged better than satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- When they start school, pupils' musical experiences are in line with age-related expectations. By the end of Key Stage 2, overall standards of musical understanding are also broadly average. This represents satisfactory progress. However, achievement in singing is barely satisfactory because not enough attention is paid to improving the quality or complexity of pupils' responses.
- The number of pupils learning to play instruments has increased to a satisfactory level as a consequence of the whole-class instrumental teaching programme. However, while all pupils take part in the annual musical productions, the number taking part in weekly extra-curricular groups is small.

Quality of teaching of music

The quality of teaching of music is satisfactory.

- Lessons are planned thoroughly. Learning objectives are clear, but are usually based on the activities to be completed rather than the quality of pupils' musical responses. There is some consideration of different abilities, particularly in Years 5 and 6, where more able pupils are given responsibility for leading group work.
- Teachers' assurance in modelling music varies considerably. In the best examples, strong musical leadership brings confident responses from pupils. This was shown extremely well in the Year 4 whole-class instrumental lesson. More often, though, teachers spend too much time talking about rather than modelling music, thus preventing pupils from hearing and understanding the musical quality that is expected.
- Teachers listen attentively to pupils' responses and always make encouraging comments. However, there is insufficient use made of audio recordings to assess and show pupils how to improve their work. There is limited monitoring of pupils' progress in music as they move through the school.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- All classes receive a weekly 30-minute music lesson. A published scheme of work is used to provide appropriate breadth and depth of curriculum coverage, and a consistent framework across the school.

- There is a weekly singing-assembly which is enjoyed by pupils, and this is supplemented by a small choir. However, there are no additional groups for instrumental performance.
- There are satisfactory resources for classroom music. Pupils participating in the whole-class instrumental teaching programme are very pleased to have their own brass instruments to take home to practise on, and this is helping them to make much faster progress.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- Since September 2009, you have led music. While a non-specialist, you have embraced national initiatives for class instrumental teaching and singing with enthusiasm. This positive approach has improved provision and some outcomes for pupils, particularly their participation rates.
- In anticipation of this inspection, the school used the recent Ofsted music report to make an accurate self-evaluation of provision. However, there has been less regular monitoring of class music lessons and, to improve provision further, this is a priority.

Subject issue – Inclusion

- A particular strength is the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. Pupils from the Special Support Unit are represented well in additional instrumental lessons and the school choir, and these activities do much to improve their confidence and self-esteem.

Subject issue – Partnerships

- A teacher from the local authority music service leads the whole-class instrumental teaching sessions. This programme has also enabled teachers and teaching assistants to learn alongside their classes and increase their own musical confidence.
- There are some extra-curricular links with secondary schools, but there are no classroom curriculum links across Key Stages 2 and 3.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that teaching is focused on pupils' musical progress by:
 - increasing teachers' musical confidence, encouraging them to make more use of music modelling and less use of verbal explanations

- making use of audio recordings to assess pupils' work and help them to hear them how they can improve
- increasing participation in extra-curricular activities, especially for instrumental work
- monitoring regularly the quality of class music lessons.

Additionally, the school's attention was drawn to its failure to meet all the current government requirements relating to safeguarding. Action to tackle this weakness is an urgent priority. This is a serious concern which I will report to the Regional Director. He will consider what action to take and may arrange an inspection of the whole school.

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

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector