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Ms C Jobling
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Jobling

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation during my visit on 10 November 2009 with Mark Phillips HMI 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of six lessons and an assembly.

Music events play a key role in the life of the school and pupils report that they enjoy taking part in whole-school concerts and other music events. Over the last year, however, the school has concentrated on raising standards in the core subjects and music has not had sufficient focus for weaknesses in provision to be resolved. As a result, the overall effectiveness of music is inadequate.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is inadequate.

- Children start school with musical abilities generally below those expected for their age. A range of music games and singing helps them to understand how to put different sound sources together.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 are low in all aspects of music learning. Occasionally pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons, but overall they make inadequate progress because activities do not challenge them appropriately and work does not always build on their previous learning and understanding.
- Music contributes significantly to pupils' social development. When they are able to take the lead in lessons, for example, they rise ably to the challenge.
- Similar numbers of boys and girls are involved in instrumental lessons.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching of music is inadequate.

- Support from the local authority enabled teachers to prepare and plan lessons, so that during the inspection teaching was satisfactory. These lessons contained a variety of musical activities and were taught with energy and enthusiasm. However, at times pupils were unclear about what they were to learn in lessons.
- Teachers do not assess pupils' work regularly. Consequently, they have limited information to help them plan lessons that are appropriately challenging to meet pupils' needs, interests and abilities.
- Audio recordings are used infrequently. As a result, pupils find it difficult to recognise the progress they have made and are unclear how to improve their work further. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support music learning is at an early stage of development.
- Evidence from violin lessons for pupils in Year 3 indicates that teaching is having insufficient impact on developing pupils' violin skills and their musical progress.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is inadequate.

- The curriculum is going through a period of change and the school recognises that currently it does not meet pupils' needs, interests and abilities. There is a lack of systematic planning of musical learning. As a result, pupils' acquisition of musical skills and knowledge is inconsistent as they move through the school.
- Un-tuned instruments are used regularly but insufficient use is made of other tuned percussion and pupils' own instruments.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is inadequate.

- There has been a lack of rigour and regularity in the planning and monitoring of music provision. Expectations of what the pupils should achieve are too low.
- However, teachers are keen to develop their music skills, display interest and enthusiasm for the subject, and demonstrate their willingness to improve the quality of music teaching in the school.
- Since the start of term, the subject leader has made a promising start toward tackling the weaknesses in music provision. Shortcomings are recognised and active consideration is being given to how initiatives can be best used to support and develop pupils' learning.

Subject issue: Inclusion

- Senior leaders recognise that music is an important subject in the development of the whole child. As a result, all pupils are involved in productions and concerts.
- Although similar numbers of boys and girls are involved in instrumental lessons, there are very few boys in the school choir.

Subject issue: Partnerships

- The school sought support from the local authority to help prepare for this inspection.
- The school has started to work with Creative Partnerships; however, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this on pupils' achievement.
- The school recognises that partnerships with secondary schools are underdeveloped.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising expectations and achieving higher standards in music by:
 - providing a curriculum that closely meets all pupils' needs, interests and abilities
 - ensuring assessment is used regularly to plan lessons
 - using audio recordings in lessons so that pupils understand how to improve their work
 - ensuring that new initiatives and all partnerships impact appropriately on pupils' involvement and musical development.

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