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Mr T Markham
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Markham

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: music

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

As outlined in the 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.

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

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory. The music curriculum provides a good framework to enable teachers to plan lessons. The school recognises that lesson planning does not always identify precisely enough what pupils are intended to learn in lessons and is implementing good strategies to bring about improvements.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- When pupils join the school in Year 3, their attainment is broadly average. They make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 2 and by the end of

Year 6 most pupils attain broadly in line with the national expectations for music. For example, pupils sing in tune with clear diction and use a range of classroom instruments effectively when they compose their own music. A minority of pupils make good progress and their attainment is above average.

- Good numbers of pupils are involved in instrumental lessons, extra-curricular activities and public performances where they achieve well.
- Pupils' personal development in music is good. They cooperate well with each other and enjoy their music lessons. Their learning in music helps them to reflect on and understand wider issues. Pupils in Year 4, for example, had developed a good understanding of the historical and social context of the two World Wars through thinking about the underlying meaning of songs from those times.

Quality of teaching of music

The quality of teaching of music is satisfactory.

- Most music teaching is undertaken by class teachers who are supported well by the subject expertise of colleagues from within the school and the local authority. As a result, teachers are beginning to develop their own confidence and understanding of effective strategies for teaching music.
- Teachers involve pupils in a good range of activities where the emphasis is usually placed on active involvement in music making. In a few cases, however, too much emphasis is placed on verbal explanations that reduce the time available for music making.
- Lessons are carefully planned but do not always identify precisely enough what pupils are intended to learn, as opposed to do, in lessons. As a result, activities do not always build on each other logically to reinforce and deepen pupils' musical understanding. Teachers provide satisfactory feedback to support pupils' learning in the classroom and make regular assessments of their progress.
- The school has begun to identify relevant ways of using information and communication technology (ICT) in music. It recognises, however, that the use of ICT, including recordings of pupils' work, is currently underdeveloped.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is good.

- The curriculum, which has been developed using a good combination of published and other resources, is reviewed regularly and adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. The good links with other curriculum areas help pupils to see their learning in music in a wider context. Progression is identified through links with National Curriculum levels, although these do not always place sufficient emphasis on the key learning identified in the first sentence of each level. The school recognises that teachers need

continuing support in using the scheme of work as the basis of planning effective lessons.

- The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities which pupils enjoy and participate in enthusiastically.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is good.

- The school has a clear vision for the continuing development of music, seen for example, in the support given to teachers to develop their understanding of how to teach music. This is having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning and the overall coherence of music across the school.
- Areas of strength and those in need of development have been identified accurately through self-evaluation. Well-targeted actions to support improvement have been identified and good support has been provided to develop the effectiveness of subject leadership. The school is aware that the recent improvement in resources for ICT provides an opportunity to further develop its use in music.

Subject issue: inclusion

- The school has an inclusive approach to music and has begun to identify areas where it needs to be more pro-active in targeting pupils. A percussion group, for example, has involved a number of boys who would otherwise not have chosen to take part in extra-curricular activities.

Subject issue: partnerships

- The school makes effective use of partnerships, including those with local schools, the local authority music service and community musicians, to improve outcomes for pupils. The expertise provided through the recently introduced 'Wider Opportunities' provision in Year 4 is extending pupils' achievements and supporting teachers' professional development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- building on existing good practice to improve the quality of teaching by:
 - identifying more precisely what pupils are intended to learn in lessons
 - ensuring that activities relate directly to the focus for learning and build on each other logically
- developing strategies to involve more pupils from different groups in instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities
- developing the use of ICT and recordings of pupils' work.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop music in the school.

As I explained in a 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

David Williams
Additional Inspector