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Mrs J Angel
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Angel

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation during my visit on 24 and 25 November 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of recordings of pupils' work; and observations of four lessons, the choir rehearsal and a keyboard club.

The overall effectiveness of music is inadequate.

Pupils report that they enjoy singing in the school concerts that are held regularly and also taking part in workshops and in other events at venues within the city of Cambridge. However, the public profile of these groups masks inadequacies in classroom provision. As a result, pupils make inadequate musical progress as they move through the school.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is inadequate.

- Children start school with musical abilities generally below those expected for their age. An appropriate range of music games and singing helps them to understand how to recognise different sound sources and provide accompaniments to well-known songs. They make satisfactory progress by the end of Reception.
- This positive start is not developed and, as a result, standards at the end of Year 6 are low, especially when pupils create their own music. However, pupils sing in tune paying careful attention to their intonation and rhythm, ensuring that the standards they reach in singing are broadly similar to those found nationally.
- Pupils make inadequate progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 because activities do not challenge them appropriately and work does not build on their previous learning and understanding. This poor progress was confirmed in the lessons observed.
- A below-average proportion of pupils, mainly girls, participates regularly in extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their enjoyment and pride when they are involved in musical activities beyond the classroom. These events also raise the school's profile in the community.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching of music is inadequate.

- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Lessons are planned effectively and contain a variety of musical activities which are taught with energy and enthusiasm. Pupils are keen to participate and understand what they are learning.
- However, these features are not present in other lessons. Pupils willingly do what is asked of them, despite not understanding what they are learning. Too much time is spent listening to oral presentations with pupils patiently waiting their turn to participate in practical activities. There is little integration of performing, composing and listening activities to develop pupils' musical understanding.
- Pupils' work is not assessed regularly by teachers. Consequently, teachers do not have the information necessary to plan lessons that are appropriately challenging and which meet pupils' different 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.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is inadequate.

- There is a lack of systematic planning and, as a result, the requirements of the National Curriculum are not met. There is no scheme of work to

ensure that key concepts and musical skills are developed regularly. There is provision for whole-class instrumental learning in Years 3, 4 and 5. However, there is very little provision for pupils to create their own music and perform in small ensembles during class lessons.

- There are annual concerts and other music events which are enjoyed and welcomed by pupils and parents alike. Although these opportunities are valuable, they do not compensate for inadequacies in the classroom curriculum.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is inadequate.

- Leadership of classroom music is unsatisfactory because teaching does not promote all aspects of pupils' musical development, the curriculum is inadequate and assessment only checks that pupils have completed a task. Expectations of what pupils should achieve are too low.
- The initial evaluation that you and your senior colleagues have conducted of the quality of music provision has been based heavily on the impact of extra-curricular activities. However, through classroom monitoring they have become aware of a number of inadequacies and have introduced a programme for improvement. It is, though, too soon to evaluate whether all aspects have been implemented by the subject leader.

Subject issue: inclusion

- You and your senior colleagues recognise that music is an important subject in the development of the whole child. There is good inclusion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in extra-curricular activities. However, provision in class lessons for all pupils is limited because all are given the same tasks and expected to work at the same pace.

Subject issue - Partnerships

- Some pupils are involved with other schools in performances organised by the Cambridge Primary Schools Singing Network (CPSSN).
- Visiting organisations, such as English Touring Opera, provide workshops for pupils which introduce them to different types of music.
- The school recognises that partnerships with secondary schools are underdeveloped but has plans to develop curriculum links in the future.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising expectations and achieving higher standards in music by:
 - providing a curriculum and comprehensive scheme of work that fulfil all the requirements of the National Curriculum

- improving the quality of teaching by ensuring assessment is used regularly so that lessons are planned thoroughly and work matches pupils' individual capabilities
- using audio recordings in lessons so that pupils understand how to improve their work
- improving the leadership of music by ensuring that music provision in the classroom enables all pupils to have equal opportunity to develop their musical interests.

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