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Mr C Rowland
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Rowland

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation during my visit on 1 December 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, observation of three lessons and the recorder group.

The overall effectiveness of music is inadequate. The school relies on an external agency to provide music teaching in the classroom. However, lessons and the curriculum do not provide sufficient challenge and, as a result, pupils do not make adequate progress.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is inadequate.

- Children start school with musical abilities generally below those expected for their age. By the end of Year 6, standards are well below those found nationally in all areas of musical development.
- Class singing is undertaken in most lessons, but too often songs are simply repeated without improving the musical quality of the singing.

- Pupils make inadequate progress because activities do not challenge them appropriately and work is not matched carefully to their individual needs and abilities. This poor progress was confirmed in the learning observed.
- Although no pupils receive individual instrumental lessons, a number are learning the recorder. The school runs a choir and a ukulele group with a similar number of boys and girls involved in both. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their enjoyment and pride when they are involved in musical activities beyond the classroom. Recently, the ukulele group played at the Tower Ballroom in Blackpool. Pupils summed up their feelings with the comment, 'it was awesome'.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching of music is inadequate.

- Lessons generally include some listening, singing and instrumental work. However, because assessment is not undertaken regularly, teachers do not know what progress individual pupils are making. Consequently, teachers do not plan lessons that take into account the wide age and ability range in each class. Pupils are given the same work to do with no challenge for those who are more able.
- Pupils spend too much time listening to verbal presentations as they sit patiently waiting to use instruments and contribute their musical ideas and suggestions in lessons.
- Audio recordings are not used to record the progress made by pupils. As a result, pupils are not able to identify 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 to meet the differing needs and abilities within the three classes and, as a result, the requirements of the National Curriculum are not met. There is no scheme of work to ensure that key concepts, including multi-cultural music and pupils' musical skills, are developed regularly. There is little provision for pupils to create their own music and perform in small ensembles during class lessons.
- Music is, however, used successfully to support pupils' learning in a number of subjects, for example singing Spanish songs, and making instruments in design and technology lessons.
- The annual concerts and other music events are enjoyed and welcomed by pupils and parents alike. Over half of the pupils are involved in enrichment activities, with nearly a third in the ukulele band.

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 is not used regularly to measure the progress made by pupils. Expectations of what pupils should achieve are too low.

- Senior leaders confirmed that their recent monitoring of music provision recognised that teaching and the curriculum do not enable pupils to make progress in their musical development.

Subject issue: inclusion

- A particular strength is the inclusion of all groups of pupils in the music activities outside of lesson time. However, provision in class lessons is inadequate because too often all are given the same task.

Subject issue: partnerships

- The school has developed helpful links with students at Leeds College of Music who are helping pupils prepare for end-of-term concerts.
- Pupils in the ukulele band benefit well from the strong links that have been established with the George Formby Society.
- The school recognises that the musical partnership with the local secondary school is underdeveloped.

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 and audio recordings are used regularly so that lessons are planned thoroughly and work matches pupils' individual capabilities
 - improving the leadership of music by ensuring that music provision in the classroom enables all pupils to have an 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