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Ms M Okoye
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Okoye

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 and 24 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; a meeting with selected pupils; visits to six lessons (including a French lesson that featured singing activities) and a singing assembly; observation of a Year 3 whole-class string lesson; consideration of recorded performances; and scrutiny of relevant documentation, including the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory. Good leadership and management, including a strong vision for music as a means of improving all areas of pupils' development, have rapidly improved curriculum provision which is now also good. At present, though, the overall effectiveness is satisfactory because standards remain below average, and satisfactory teaching leads to satisfactory progress in lessons.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- Throughout the school, from Reception to Year 6, pupils' attainment in music is below average. While they enjoy participating, the musical quality of their work is less sophisticated than that expected nationally. Those in the early stages of learning English or, indeed, French are helped well in improving diction and speaking with confidence through singing. Overall, though, musical progress is satisfactory.
- The number of pupils learning to play instruments is satisfactory. However, while all pupils take part in whole-school events, such as the summer concert, the number taking part in extra-curricular groups is small.

Quality of teaching of music

The quality of teaching of music is satisfactory.

- The specialist teacher has excellent music skills. Class lessons are organised well, although planning is focused on activities to be completed rather than improving the musical quality of pupils' responses. Furthermore, all pupils are set the same tasks; there is no distinction between what is expected from the more able or from those who find learning more difficult.
- The whole-class instrumental programme is widening access to tuition considerably and is having a positive effect on pupils' social development and enjoyment. However, this work has a limited effect on their musical development because teaching does not focus sufficiently to good posture, correct technique, or wider musical understanding.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is good.

- All classes receive a weekly music lesson and a singing session. The scheme of work provides suitable coverage of the breadth and depth of the curriculum requirements. There is good understanding of what should be expected at different ages, although the school recognises that pupils do not yet meet these expectations.
- There is a choir, and an instrumental group for more advanced players, some of whom receive instrumental tuition outside of school.
- Resources for classroom music are good. The specialist music room is well-ordered, spacious, and well-equipped with keyboards, tuned percussion, and world-music instruments.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is good.

- While there has been a heavy and necessary focus on improving standards of literacy and numeracy in recent years, music has by no means been neglected. Senior managers have shown high levels of commitment to music through improving the curriculum, improving accommodation and resources, appointing staff with excellent subject skills and brokering partnerships to broaden pupils' experiences. This is a significant improvement on previous provision, although the school recognises that these improvements have yet to show impact on the long-term musical progress made by pupils.
- Safeguarding procedures in music are thorough, including rigorous checks on visiting teachers and meticulous risk-assessments for visits.
- Regular use is made of the singing-strategy online materials, although the school has yet to benefit from the national music initiatives' training.

Subject issue: inclusion

- There is a firm commitment to inclusion. All groups are able to make broadly similar progress, although proportionally, more girls and White British pupils participate in extra-curricular activities.

Subject issue: partnerships

- Teachers from the local authority music service lead the whole-class instrumental teaching sessions. It is very positive that class teachers and teaching assistants also learn to play alongside their pupils. However, insufficient use is made of class teachers' expertise to help the local authority teachers assess and adapt the lessons to help pupils make better progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the standards achieved by pupils to at least be in line with national expectations so that they make good or better progress
- ensuring that planning for class music lessons targets improved standards and progress for pupils of all abilities rather than simply organising the activities that pupils will participate in
- improving the quality of the instrumental-teaching programme by:
 - ensuring that sufficient attention is paid to the quality of pupils' posture and their learning of correct instrumental techniques, together with their general musicianship
 - using class teachers' expertise and knowledge of their pupils to ensure that lessons are planned and evaluated with consideration of all pupils' needs and progress.

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

As explained in the 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