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Ms S Harrison
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Harrison

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 27 January 2010 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 learners; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of five lessons, two extra-curricular activities and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of music is good. Teaching is well focused and lively, engages pupils directly in making and responding to music, enabling them to make good progress. The curriculum, which includes a good range of musical styles, is enhanced well by partnerships with external agencies and musicians.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is good.

- Pupils make good progress in lessons and in relation to their starting points. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is above average and in

some aspects, for example, in performing on African drums, it is outstanding. Pupils sing accurately and confidently with clear diction and well-projected tone quality, both in unison and in parts. All pupils in Year 3 take part in whole-class instrumental lessons which complement their learning in other music lessons.

- Good numbers of pupils are involved in instrumental lessons, extra-curricular activities and in public performances, where they achieve well.
- Pupils' personal development in music is good. They very much enjoy their music lessons and other activities, are enthusiastic, concentrate well and help each other to learn effectively.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is good.

- Teaching is undertaken by a combination of specialist music and class teachers who have developed good understanding of the music curriculum. Very good working relationships between teachers and pupils help to establish a positive climate for learning. Teachers' secure subject knowledge is used effectively to model effective practice, to assess the progress being made by pupils and provide helpful feedback that enables pupils to improve their work.
- Lessons are planned carefully and almost always identify what pupils are intended to learn, as well as do. Activities are varied and consistently focus on pupils' active involvement in music-making. In a few cases, pupils are not given sufficient responsibility for their own learning and the creative aspects of the lesson are too teacher-led.
- The school is making imaginative use of information and communication technology (ICT) in music, especially with pupils in Year 6, who had explored ways in which sound samples could be electronically manipulated. The school has already identified ways in which it plans to extend the use of ICT in the future.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is good.

- The curriculum includes a good range of musical styles and genres and a variety of musical activities, including regular opportunities for singing in all year groups. Although lesson plans identify clearly what pupils are intended to learn, the scheme of work does not provide an overview of progression by, for example, identifying what pupils of different prior attainment are expected to achieve by the end of each unit.
- Opportunities, provided by the local authority's music service, for all pupils in Year 3 to learn to play the fife make a good contribution to pupils' achievements. Planning and assessment arrangements do not, however, link with existing systems within the school and opportunities to develop greater coherence are not fully taken up.

- The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of individual and small group instrumental lessons and workshops, many of which involve all pupils in the relevant year groups. Extra-curricular activities, including choir and African drumming ensembles, take place regularly and are well attended. There are, however, few regular ensembles aimed specifically at pupils who receive instrumental lessons.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in music is good.

- The school's vision for music is clearly articulated through the richness of its provision and the opportunities provided for pupils. This includes ensuring that all pupils receive specialist teaching alongside that provided by class teachers. All pupils are, therefore, supported to achieve well and to benefit from a good variety of opportunities. Instrumental tuition and the whole-class instrumental programme in Year 3 are also provided by specialist teachers.
- Arrangements for monitoring provision are good and lead to the identification of appropriate support to further develop the effectiveness of teaching and subject leadership. For example, the subject leader is developing her expertise in teaching African drumming. This is having a significant impact on pupils' achievements.

Subject issue: inclusion

- In addition to the school's inclusive approach to music within the classroom, there are good opportunities beyond lessons for all pupils to be involved in music-making. While the overall proportion of pupils involved in music-making beyond the classroom is high, the school recognises that it should provide further encouragement for pupils entitled to free school meals and those with English as an additional language to take part in a wider range of extra-curricular activities.

Subject issue: partnerships

- The school has well-established links with the local authority music service and other professional musicians and agencies. These are used effectively to improve outcomes and provision for pupils. For example, the expertise provided through the whole-class instrumental provision in Year 3 is extending pupils' achievements, while also supporting class teachers' professional development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing coherence in provision by:
 - making the links and relationships between learning in whole-class instrumental lessons and other music lessons more explicit

- identifying what pupils of differing prior attainment are expected to learn by the end of each unit
 - using these expectations as the basis for assessing pupils' achievements
- developing strategies to involve more pupils from different groups in instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities.

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

As I 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

David Williams
Additional Inspector