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Mrs M Fraher  
Headteacher  
St Philip's Catholic Primary School  
London Road  
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Dear Mrs Fraher

Ofsted 2010-11 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 14 and 15 June 2010 to look at work in music.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation and analysis of pupils' work. Eight lessons were visited, including instrumental lessons.

The overall effectiveness of music is good.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is good.

- Instrumental performance work is a particular strength and a key factor in pupils' above average standards in musical understanding. From Year 2 onwards, over half the pupils learn to play an instrument, some more than one. Standards in singing and in creating musical ideas are broadly average. In songs that pupils know well and enjoy, they produce a full sound with a good awareness of pitch. Two-part singing is broadly typical of the expected standards. Pupils' creative skills are less well developed because this aspect of music is not as well covered in lessons.
- Many pupils are very committed to music and they are confident performers. Several spoke of how music was an important part of their lives and some instrumentalists were passionate about music. All pupils

listen respectfully when others are performing, for example in assemblies and lessons, and they acknowledge and appreciate other pupils' talents.

- Pupils' involvement in extra-curricular musical activities is high. There is a marked contrast in the participation of boys and girls with many more girls attending extra-curricular music activities than boys.

#### Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Instrumental lessons are planned well, with a good balance of appropriate activities to develop all-round musicianship. Teachers observe and listen to pupils carefully when they play and make judicious use of their own instruments to demonstrate and model.
- The music leader teaches all classes on a weekly basis and draws upon a range of material to support pupils' learning. Some of the games and activities promote good enjoyment and participation, and develop a range of skills. However, pupils' prior skills and knowledge are not taken sufficiently into account when planning these lessons. There is more emphasis on the series of activities that pupils will do rather than what they can learn. Consequently, some pupils do not make as much progress as they could, particularly the more able musicians.

#### Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is good.

- Many pupils are involved in extra-curricular activities in music. There is good commitment to including everyone, and all pupils in the class are involved in the special liturgical events and celebrations and when visiting musicians come to the school.
- The school organises a good range of instrumental tuition and visiting instrumental teachers are in school every day of the week.
- Class teachers integrate music into the creative curriculum to link with other subjects. Some effective work was seen in Year 1, when pupils devised simple rhythmic accompaniments to an African song that they had learnt. In another class, pupils sang songs that had been specially composed by their teacher, to support learning in French, mathematics and history.
- The school has a detailed scheme of work which provides sufficient breadth across the main aspects of the music curriculum, including singing, performing, creating musical ideas and listening, although there are very limited opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) in music. The scheme of work is structured in such a way that pupils gain skills and knowledge progressively as they move through the school. However, this scheme is mainly on hold this year, with the new music leader using her own ideas and resources, pending revisions to the scheme. This interim arrangement

is limiting progression in learning for all pupils, notably the most able, through class lessons, and the school recognises that it is an important priority to reconcile the established scheme of work with the new music leader's ideas.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

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

- The school has a strong ethos of valuing music as an important means of communication and expression and giving all pupils the chance to be involved in musical activities, such as performances and celebrations. Senior leaders and governors are highly committed to music. Governors have demonstrated their support through deploying funding for class teachers to work alongside the music leader during music lessons.
- Links with the local authority's music service are good and well-established.
- You have a good awareness of music provision and self-evaluation is accurate. Together with the music leader, you have recognised that ICT is used insufficiently in music and plans are already in place for developing this further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that planning for class lessons takes full account of pupils' prior musical skills and understanding to promote their learning further, particularly for those who play instruments
- making sure that, for September 2010, the scheme of work is revised and re-established to promote good progress as pupils move through the school, and that sufficient opportunities are provided for using ICT in music.

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

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website under the unique reference number for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson  
Her Majesty's Inspector