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8 July 2010

Mrs G Holland
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Holland

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: music

I am sorry that you were unable to be present during my visit on 17 June 2010 to look at work in music. Please thank your staff for their hospitality and cooperation, and the pupils for giving up their time to talk to me.

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 pupils and key staff; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of seven lessons, a Year 6 singing session and an after-school keyboard club.

The overall effectiveness of music is inadequate.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is inadequate.

- Although pupils are provided with a satisfactory range of musical activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage, they do not make enough progress during their time in school and have some significant gaps in their musical skills, understanding and knowledge. Consequently, pupils' achievement and their progress over time are inadequate. For example, by Year 6, some pupils can sing reasonably in tune and with clear diction. However, most struggle to follow a simple rhythmic pattern or identify the general pitch of notes. Girls generally attain higher standards in music than do boys. Melodic and rhythmic skills are underdeveloped. Pupils' understanding of music from different times or places and their knowledge

of how to select and combine sounds using music technology are particularly weak. Consequently, pupils' attainment is low.

- An increasing number of pupils enjoy practical musical activities but music does not have a high enough profile within the school. Very few pupils, including only a handful of boys, take part in extra-curricular musical activities. This further limits their musical development and their opportunities to develop as competent performers. Approximately, 12 Year 6 pupils were observed singing songs with enthusiasm and enjoyment in preparation for a forthcoming concert. However, progress during this session was weak. Recent changes have enabled pupils to enjoy the subject more, but their full impact on pupils' standards and progress has yet to be seen.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is inadequate.

- In Key Stage 1, music is taught by teaching assistants to allow teachers time to do their other preparation work; Key Stage 2 is taught by non-specialist class teachers. Staff have not received sufficient training in assessing musical progress and planning for progression in learning. Pupils do not make adequate musical progress over time because expectations of what they should be doing are generally too low. This results in some work being too easy for the more able pupils. The quality of teaching provided by the visiting music specialists is significantly more effective. Insufficient attention is given to developing specific musical skills, knowledge and understanding during lessons. Consequently, pupils do not learn as well as they should. However, the quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory and children make appropriate progress towards the goals expected for their age.
- Assessment in music is inadequate because it takes too little account of the pupils' prior learning or their understanding of musical concepts. Teachers do not make effective use of assessment information to ensure that work matches the needs of all pupils. Audio recordings of individual or group work are not used sufficiently to evaluate pupils' progress. As a result, pupils do not know how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve their work.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is inadequate.

- The curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. However, in Years 1 to 6, the music curriculum does not cover all required aspects and very few pupils participate in extra-curricular music making. Planning does not demonstrate an understanding of progression in learning. Tasks are not sequenced sufficiently to ensure that learning is consolidated or extended. In Key Stage 1, the commercial scheme of work is relied on too heavily. Although music lessons are appropriately focused

on practical activities, some are too easy for the pupils. The breadth of experiences offered is restricted. For example, information and communication technology (ICT) is not used sufficiently to help them create and record music.

- Weekly singing sessions are delivered in each key stage by a visiting specialist teacher. However, only one weekly extra-curricular music activity takes place; a keyboard club that only nine pupils participate in. They undertake this for only one term. This does not encourage the development of musical skills. Pupils have very few opportunities to play instruments together and to perform to others.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

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

- Leadership and management of the subject, at all levels, have not ensured that the subject receives sufficient attention within the school. Music has not been a priority over the last few years. The school has no clear vision of music for all. Recognising this, senior staff have recently established a focus group to tackle the decline in standards and pupils' growing disinterest in music. However, this group did not include the music coordinator. Nonetheless, it has provided a focus on enjoyment, and singing activities based on the 'Sing Up' materials have been instigated. As a result, some pupils have a renewed interest in performing music.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that pupils' progress in music is rigorously monitored and evaluated. Plans are not scrutinised sufficiently to ensure that all aspects of the subject are covered in enough detail or that there is a clear understanding of how well pupils are learning. Senior staff recognise that monitoring of provision in music has been inadequate but have not done enough to ensure adequate capacity for sustained improvement. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to attend regional and community musical activities, to work with different musicians or to experience live music.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising attainment and improving progress in music by:
 - ensuring staff teaching music have secure subject knowledge
 - ensuring staff use assessment information more effectively to plan music lessons that better meet pupils' differing learning needs
- ensuring the music curriculum meets the needs of all pupils by:
 - delivering all the required aspects of the subject, including the use of ICT
 - establishing clear progression of pupils' musical skills, knowledge and understanding

- increasing the range and appropriateness of extra-curricular activities so that opportunities for pupils to perform music and the numbers participating are increased
- improving the leadership and management of music by:
 - establishing a rigorous monitoring system to evaluate and improve the quality of provision for the subject
 - giving greater emphasis to the subject within the school so that it is valued by pupils as both important and enjoyable.

I hope that 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 URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Briggs
Additional Inspector