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Ms J D'Abreu  
Headteacher  
Devonshire Hill Primary School  
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Dear Ms D'Abreu

### **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 9 July 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 scrutiny of relevant documentation and of pupils' work; visits to the whole-school singing practice and music assembly; and visits to class music lessons.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

#### **Achievement in music**

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- Overall standards of musical understanding, including in playing instruments and creating music at the end of Year 6, are below average. This represents satisfactory progress, given pupils' prior experiences when they start school. They do well to reach average standards in vocal work; two-part work is secure, diction is clear, and pupils are very enthusiastic. However, occasionally, excessive volume reduces tone quality.
- Numbers of pupils participating in the school choir, and the 'Inspiration' music club for more able pupils, are good overall, although many more girls than boys attend. However, it is positive that pupils from all groups are represented, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. All Year 4 pupils have had the opportunity to play the steel pans; at present no additional instrumental lessons are available, although a small number learn outside of school.

- Those who take part in the choir and the 'Inspiration' group gain a great deal, musically and socially, from performing in the community and at local professional venues, such as The Roundhouse.

### **Quality of teaching in music**

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- A significant number of staff have good musical skills which they demonstrate confidently. However, these skills are not used enough to provide consistently engaging and musical learning. As much time is spent talking and theorising as is spent in active music-making. For example, in a Year 6 class, the teacher gave an outstanding demonstration of a Caribbean folk song which she then taught to the class. When they repeated the song back to her, she was not satisfied with their response and required them to repeat individual phrases until they were correct, at the same time showing them expertly how to improve their singing. However, while this part of the lesson was first-rate, it came between over-long periods of teacher talk during which pupils were unduly passive and not involved in musical activity. As a result of such inconsistencies found in lessons across the school, pupils only make satisfactory progress.
- Lessons are planned in detail, and regular assessments made against National Curriculum levels. However, very little use is made of recordings to help pupils understand and assess the quality of their work.
- Good musical direction is given to the steel pans tuition, the singing assemblies, and to the 'Inspiration' music group.

### **Quality of the curriculum in music**

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- Curriculum planning is underpinned by a published scheme of work which is adapted sufficiently, including through the school's 'creative curriculum', to ensure that pupils' needs are met and that all requirements are covered. However, more consideration is required to make clear the musical understanding expected of pupils at different stages. Making these expectations clear is central to raising musical standards across the school.
- The steel pans and singing tuition are valuable additions to regular class music lessons, as are the choir and 'Inspiration' music group. The school has recently started to use information and communication technology to help pupils to create their own music. Although the dedicated music room provides a good and well-ordered base for lessons and rehearsals, the range of instruments for classroom work would benefit from renewal and expansion, particularly for older pupils.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in music**

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

- Although the school has a clear focus on raising standards of literacy and numeracy, music has not been neglected. In particular, the governing body has fully funded the cost of steel pans and vocal tuition. The school has correctly identified the need to extend instrumental work and has arranged for whole-class woodwind, brass, and violin teaching for all Year 4 pupils from September 2010. The school has secured funding from a charity for the cost of this, but it is disappointing that the school has yet to benefit from the standards funding for whole-class music tuition.
- Self-evaluation is accurate; paired observations and conversations during the inspection showed a good understanding of the issues concerning the teaching and learning of music. However, monitoring of music teaching has not been sufficient, an area for improvement correctly identified by the music leader.
- The music leader has benefited from some professional development opportunities provided through the national singing strategy; however, she has not participated in the national Key Stage 2 music training programme.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- ensuring that the central focus in class lessons is on teachers' and pupils' musical activity, with appropriate use of teacher-talk to support musical learning
- showing, through the curriculum scheme of work, a clear definition of the musical understanding that pupils' should demonstrate as they progress through the school
- improving the range and condition of classroom instruments, particularly for older pupils
- ensuring that the music leader has sufficient time to monitor the quality of teaching, and that she is able to benefit from additional professional development opportunities.

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

**Mark Phillips**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**