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Mrs A Keen
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Keen

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you very much for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on Friday 15 June 2007.

At the end of the inspection I fed back my judgements and this letter is to confirm my findings. As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the extent to which every pupil is benefiting from your music provision. It also explored the links you have developed with other schools and agencies, such as the local music service.

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 unless to highlight exceptional practice. In such circumstances the school would be contacted prior to publication to agree the exact wording. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with members of staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons and extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- Standards in Year 6 are just below national expectations. However, pupils join the school with lower than expected standards in music and the progress made by pupils overall during their time in the school is satisfactory.
- While standards in Year 5 are also below national expectations, the instrumental programme engenders good enjoyment and personal development for the pupils

involved. However, no pupil involved in the programme last year chose to continue instrumental tuition in Year 6.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall.

- The school benefits from the musical expertise of a specialist music teacher who teaches every class, including Reception. In these lessons, musical skills and ideas are modelled confidently, so that pupils can see and hear what is expected. Repertoire is appropriate for all ages, and songs are always pitched correctly. There are good working relationships between the teacher and the pupils.
- Whilst planning includes performing, composing, listening and appraising appropriately, there is sometimes too much verbal explanation about the activity to be attempted. As a consequence not enough time is given for pupils to develop their musical skills and understanding. Lessons also tend to focus on the activities to be covered, rather than on the musical skills to be learnt by the pupils.
- Lessons taught by the specialist music teacher are well supported by class teachers and teaching assistants, who use the time to develop their own musical skills, knowledge and understanding. Some develop this further by providing additional sessions for their classes to follow-up the main music lesson. They also use these opportunities to assess their pupils against music criteria provided by the music teacher, and to identify the development of more general personal and social characteristics that will help them in their roles as tutors. However, the music assessment criteria are not matched clearly to National Curriculum levels and these assessments are not yet used effectively to plan lessons that promote further improvements in the quality of pupils' work.
- Staff notation is introduced from the start of Key Stage 2. However, insufficient emphasis is given to hearing the sounds first and so, for the great majority, the formal teaching of notation does not contribute to pupils' overall musical development. Alternative notations are used more successfully in the instrumental/vocal programme and in other activities, especially where pupils are helped to develop clear awareness of the relationship between the sound and the symbol.

Quality of the curriculum

The overall quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision is satisfactory.

- The time committed to curriculum music by the school is good.
- There is an increasing range of classroom instruments, including enough woodwind instruments for every pupil in the instrumental/vocal programme. The school has made a considerable investment in these instruments over the past two years.
- There is a clearly planned and sequenced scheme of work that follows a commercially produced resource. However, whilst this scheme ensures that there

is appropriate breadth of activities, it is not used in a way that is sufficiently flexible or responsive to pupils' needs, abilities, or interests.

- Very few pupils participate in individual or small-group instrumental tuition. The instrumental/vocal programme has provided a good opportunity for Year 5 pupils to start to learn a woodwind instrument, but no pupils have yet continued with this tuition after the initial year. Socio-economic reasons have been identified as a reason for this, but the school has not yet explored alternative ways in which continued participation could be achieved other than through traditionally organised instrumental tuition.
- There is a Key Stage 1 music club and a Key Stage 2 choir, both of which are attended by a committed group of pupils. Students enjoy singing in the whole-school end of term productions, but understandably would like to have more opportunities to perform in ensembles in a broader range of musical styles.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are satisfactory overall.

- You and the governing body give good support to music through provision of curriculum time and considerable commitment of resources. This includes considerable part-funding of the instrumental/vocal programme in addition to the funding allocated by the local authority music service. However despite this strong commitment, the full impact of this investment has yet to be seen in terms of pupil continued participation or overall standards at the end of Year 6.
- The specialist music teacher provides a confident role model for music in the school. The support of class teachers in music lessons, including instrumental sessions, is also strong, and is doing much to build the school's capacity for further improvement. However, teachers do not share their expertise with each other to ensure that lessons have a sufficient emphasis on pupils' learning.

Subject issues: Data collection and partnerships

- Assessment by class teachers is linked to pupils' skills, knowledge, and understanding in music but it is not related to National Curriculum levels. The assessment data collected is also not used to inform lesson planning and ensure pupils are given appropriate challenge and support.
- The school has developed a positive relationship with the local music service to provide specialist classroom music teaching and the instrumental programme. However, there has not yet been enough consideration of how the project might be sustained year-on-year to ensure that participating Year 5 pupils continue to make progress into Year 6 and into their Secondary schools.

Inclusion

- This school has a very inclusive approach to music in that specialist class music teaching is provided for all pupils, and all class teachers are also committed to the development of their own musical understanding. The school has recognised that, historically, very few pupils have enjoyed the benefits of specialist instrumental tuition and has been proactive in seeking support through the

instrumental programme. However, whilst all Year 5 pupils have enjoyed this programme for the past two years, there are still barriers to pupils' participation in extended instrumental work and the school agrees that resolving this issue is a key area for further development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- building on teachers' music subject expertise, and their expertise in planning and using assessment for teaching, to ensure that all curriculum music lessons have a clear focus on learning
- maximising the positive impact of the instrumental/vocal programme by ensuring that pupils' progress is continued into Year 6 and beyond, either through class music lessons and/or further specialist group instrumental tuition
- broadening the range of, and extending participation in, ensemble music-making opportunities for pupils.

I very much hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop music in your school.

A copy of this feedback will be sent to your local authority, will be available to the next institutional inspection team, and will be published.

In 6-12 months after the inspection visit, we would like to gather information on the impact of this inspection on the improvements in this subject in your school. To this end you may be contacted by telephone or sent a questionnaire to complete. We appreciate your co-operation in this evaluation.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools