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24 May 2011

Mr A Nicholls
Headteacher
Moorcroft Wood Primary School
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Dear Mr Nicholls

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils during my visit on the 11 May 2011 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: discussions with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; joint observations of four lessons with the headteacher; a whole-school singing practice and a meeting with a representative of the Forest Arts music service.

The overall effectiveness of music is inadequate. You took up your post as headteacher at the start of this term and reported that you found music provision to be a low priority for the school. There are, indeed, weaknesses in curriculum planning and teaching and, despite pupils making appropriate progress in some lessons, they do not make the expected progress overall in their musical learning.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is inadequate.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have had a mixed experience of music activities before starting in Reception. Using a range of music games, singing and the outside music area where children can listen to and describe environmental sounds, they are able to experience, enjoy and become familiar with music and instruments.

- Singing is a regular feature of most music lessons and thus is the strongest aspect of pupils' musical development. Composition work is much less well represented and pupils have a limited understanding of different musical styles. This variation, plus particular weaknesses in overall curriculum planning means that standards are low at the end of Year 6 and pupils' achievement is inadequate.
- Pupils enjoy taking part in the regular musical productions. During the inspection, a group of violinists performed, talked knowledgeably about the pieces and confidently counted themselves in as they started playing their music. Nevertheless, only a few pupils benefit from individual instrumental tuition.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is inadequate.

- Most teachers are confident and enthusiastic when leading music lessons. Working relationships are positive and pupils are encouraged to express their opinions about their own and others' work. In some lessons, pupils' musical abilities are known and they are enabled to support others and lead ensemble work.
- Although some lessons observed during the inspection enabled pupils to make appropriate progress, this is not a common or consistent feature. There are low expectations and insufficient challenge in too many lessons, a characteristic noticed by pupils who describe lessons as 'boring' and the work as 'too easy'. Pupils are also unsure how particular lessons link with previous and future learning.
- Helpful verbal guidance is given to pupils during some lessons to enable them to improve. Audio and video recordings are used in some lessons so that pupils can listen to their work in progress. However, assessing their progress over time and using this information to inform next lessons are underdeveloped. Currently, there are few computer programs for pupils to use so that they can experience different sound sources.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is inadequate.

- Teachers use a combination of approaches for music curriculum planning. Individual lessons are either linked to overall classroom subjects and cross-curricular themes – for example, using music to support learning in mathematics and science – or a commercially published scheme is used to plan discrete music lessons. In practice, this mixed approach does not map or systematically develop pupils' musical skills, knowledge and understanding as they move through the school. School leaders recognise the weaknesses in this arrangement and are actively considering implementing a consistent approach.
- Pupils welcome the opportunities to work with external visitors, when they can explore different styles of music. However, these single events are not linked into the whole music curriculum in a way that develops pupils' initial

interest. The school has a good range of musical instruments; however they not all are used regularly.

- Although pupils are involved in the annual school productions, there are no ensembles meeting regularly where pupils can make music together. However, especially at Christmas, pupils are able to form a choir and sing to different audiences which they much enjoy.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

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

- During the inspection, leaders were honest and candid about the current music provision. Joint observations indicated that you have a clear understanding of the strengths in teaching and how these impact positively on pupils' progress. Leaders recognise that improvements need to be made and have already, in a very short time, started to consider how this should be done. Consequently, although we discussed various issues, it is too early to judge any impact on the quality of teaching, the curriculum and pupils' progress. Nevertheless, it does indicate a good understanding of the role music should play in the overall development of pupils at Moorcroft Wood and how they should be involved in musical activities.
- For the last three years, leaders declined invitations to be involved in the local 'Wider Opportunities' whole-class instrumental programme. However, you have now arranged that these lessons will start in September 2011.
- Although an audit of teachers' needs to help them teach music more effectively has been undertaken, as yet no training has been provided. Implementing this, regular monitoring of planning and an appropriate assessment system are recognised by leaders as clear priorities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the quality of the teaching to raise the standards that pupils reach, and the progress they make, by:
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations of pupils' capabilities are high enough
 - making sure that all teachers assess the progress made by pupils in lessons and use this information to provide music activities that meet pupils' differing needs and capabilities
 - using audio and other recordings regularly in lessons so that pupils can hear and understand how to improve their work as well as celebrating their composing and performing successes
- ensuring that the music curriculum meets the needs of all pupils by:
 - appropriately adapting the current scheme of work so that pupils' musical skills, knowledge and understanding are revisited regularly and are developed systematically as pupils move through the school

- considering how computer programs can be included in lessons
- expanding the programme of extra-curricular activities, so that more pupils can make music together regularly
- strengthening the leadership and management of music by:
 - monitoring the music provision within the school regularly and ensuring that all actions promote higher standards and good progress by all pupils
 - implementing an assessment system that ensures pupils' musical progress is recorded and informs future teaching.

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 published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector