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Mr H Abbott
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Abbott

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 26 and 27 September 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: interviews with staff and students; a meeting with the deputy head of Warwickshire County Music Service; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of eight class lessons, two instrumental lessons, and an extra-curricular vocal ensemble.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- Standards in Key Stage 3 are broadly average. There are strengths in using information and communication technology (ICT) to create and manipulate musical sounds but equally there are weaknesses in the development of singing. Students' breadth of knowledge about different kinds of music is developed satisfactorily although aspects of world music do not feature strongly in students' musical choices and thinking. Overall, Key Stage 3 students make satisfactory progress, given their prior musical abilities and experiences.
- In 2011, GCSE music results were broadly average. There are strengths in performance, particularly for those who receive additional instrumental

tuition but aspects of listening are weaker. Work observed suggests that current Year 11 students are making satisfactory progress.

- In the A-level music and music technology courses, standards are above average. There is a strong element of personalisation and students are motivated and pursue their private studies with commitment. Consequently the achievement of these students is good.
- Overall, the proportions of students benefiting from additional instrumental tuition and/or participating in extra-curricular music are good. However, there are disparities in the take-up from different groups. The numbers of students involved who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are in receipt of free school meals, are from other ethnic groups or with English as an additional language, are disproportionately low.
- Wider outcomes for students who participate in music are good. This is a strength of the school. High profile ensembles and concerts and community events are well regarded. Students speak warmly of their teachers and behavior is good in lesson and in extra-curricular activities. The school has a number of case studies which demonstrate improvements in individual students' personal and social development as a result of participation in music.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Lessons are well ordered and students are clear about the tasks that they are expected to complete. Working relationships and behaviour are good in all classes and students cooperate well in pairs and groups. Students and teachers are confident in the use of ICT.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and competent musicians. Some lessons are characterised by clear sequential progression and modelling to show students what is expected. However, more frequently all students start from similar points and expectations are measured in criteria which do not focus sufficiently on musical outcomes.
- While all lessons include practical musical activity, students' responses show that there is insufficient linkage of listening and composing work for students to apply aspects understood from the music of others to enable them to make discerning choices in compositions.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- The take-up of extra-curricular activities and provision for instrumental tuition is good and these are strengths of the school. A variety of ensembles achieves high standards of music making and provides enrichment for those students who participate.
- The curriculum for Key Stage 3 is satisfactorily organised and provides appropriate breadth and depth of coverage. However, schemes of work do

not indicate how musical skills are built on within and between units of work. In particular, planning and development of singing is limited from Years 7 to 9. Similarly, in Key Stages 4 and 5 planning is brief and focused on examination criteria.

- Accommodation is appropriate and classrooms are kept in good order, although aspects of display do not reflect the high standards seen elsewhere in the school.
- While the partnership with Warwickshire County Music Service is successful in promoting good standards of performance for those who received instrumental tuition, other aspects of partnership working, for example, working with professional musicians, are not systematically and consistently integrated into the curriculum.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- The commitment to music and its role in the life of the school is strong. Teachers work hard to promote music, particularly through extra-curricular activities. These are supported by the effective partnership with Warwickshire County Music Service to promote standards of performance for those who receive instrumental tuition.
- Older students have good opportunities to take on responsibility in organising concerts and groups within the school.
- While there are undoubted strengths in aspects of the school's music, there is more to do in curriculum planning and the development of teaching if students are to make the outstanding musical progress to which the school aspires.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the quality of teaching and learning in lessons by:
 - ensuring that there is clear progression of musical skills throughout schemes of work
 - ensuring that singing is fully integrated into the curriculum and lesson planning so that all students develop singing regularly
 - providing a closer match of activities to students individual needs and abilities, particularly in Key Stage 3
 - ensuring that there are clear, musical criteria for how students can improve and identify success
- improving systems for evaluating and monitoring improvement in teaching and learning
- increasing the participation of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, in receipt of free school meals, and from other ethnic

groups or with English as an additional language in additional music activities.

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

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy
Her Majesty's Inspector