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Mr R Hughes  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Hughes

### **Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: music**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 19 and 20 March 2012 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 students; a meeting with the Deputy Head of Bradford Music Service; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work, and observation of an assembly and four class lessons. A telephone conversation was held with the headteacher of a local primary school.

The overall effectiveness of music is inadequate.

### **Achievement in music**

Achievement in music is inadequate.

- Standards in Key Stage 3 are below average in all aspects of the music curriculum. Weaknesses in students' knowledge of different musical styles, plus their underdeveloped rhythmic and melodic skills, lead to their inadequate progress.
- Students in Key Stage 4 study BTEC music courses, which last for either one or two years. The small number of students who completed the course in 2011 all passed. Work observed by the students in Years 10 and 11 indicates that although they keep a careful diary of the activities they have undertaken, their written work lacks musical detail. Similarly, students' discussions in class tend to be superficial and weaknesses in

their musical knowledge are evident. Overall, current students are making inadequate progress given their starting points.

- Sixth form students began a Level 3 BTEC music course in September 2011. Not all these students had studied music previously and this disadvantages them. Students' enthusiasm and determination to do well does not make up for their lack of basic music knowledge when writing about or composing music.
- The proportion of students taking part in music activities and/or receiving individual instrumental lessons has increased significantly during the last three years. Increased opportunities are now provided for students to perform to different audiences. This, together with increased opportunities for students to use the music rooms regularly, means that more students are taking part in music than before. As a result many are improving their confidence and presentation skills.

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

The quality of teaching in music is inadequate.

- Lesson plans do not take sufficient account of students' previous involvement in music activities or provide appropriate challenge to meet students' individual needs and abilities to assure their musical progress. Too often, teachers have low expectations of students' capabilities and provide insufficient guidance and modelling. Consequently, students do not know what they are going to learn or how they could get better.
- Grading of students' work in lessons is undertaken regularly. However, too much time is spent deciding on a particular grade, rather than identifying the way that improvements can be made. Students hear and use musical terms regularly, but they do not always know how to use these words accurately in either their written or oral work.
- Too often, students' progress is limited because they have to complete written worksheets or read music using traditional notation. This is a barrier for some students; consequently, a few become disaffected and this results in low-level disruption.
- Where teaching is stronger, students are taught how to make progress through appropriate questioning combined with musical demonstration. In these lessons, students are able to experiment and consequently understand how to improve the musical quality of their work. This was evident when some Year 8 students were introduced to a music computer program; their interest was evident and they understood how to improve.

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

The quality of the curriculum in music is inadequate.

- The Key Stage 3 curriculum is taught in Years 7 and 8. The current scheme of work provides a brief description of the units to be taught and what students are going to do, but gives no indication as to how students' musical skills are to be developed and progression made. Information and

communication technology (ICT) is underdeveloped and singing is not a regular feature of music lessons.

- The potential for gaps in students' music education are apparent, as some students choose to study music again in Year 11, others not until Year 12. Consequently, ensuring a consistent progression in students' musical skills, knowledge and understanding is not possible.
- Since September 2011, some Year 9 students have studied a music module designed to interest them and involve them in different aspects of the arts. In principle, this is a helpful development, but it is too early to assess the impact of this strategy.
- Teachers and students benefit from impressive accommodation and resources for music. While numbers learning instruments have increased, very few ensembles meet and rehearse regularly. The 'Elastic Band' has recently been formed and involves pupils from a local primary school as a way to develop and encourage transition activities. Bradford Music Service has been active in facilitating this work.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is inadequate.

- Teachers have insufficient knowledge of students' involvement in Wider Opportunities or the Sing Up programme during their time in primary schools. Consequently, they are unable to build an informative picture about students' musical strengths and capabilities so that a suitable curriculum can be devised and taught appropriately.
- Senior leaders value music strongly. They have already identified the significant weaknesses within music provision and initial plans are being taken further in order to address them. However, recent links to develop instrumental transition programmes and liaison with primary schools, in conjunction with the music service, are embryonic.
- Monitoring of individual instrumental provision is underdeveloped; as a result, it is not possible to ensure that instrumental lessons provide value for money or to assess and address any training needs for staff.

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

- improving students' achievement and raising standards in music by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of students' musical capabilities
  - providing work in lessons that meets individual students' abilities and takes into account their musical involvement prior to Year 7
  - ensuring that students understand what they are learning and know how to make musical improvements to their work

- improving the quality of the curriculum and lesson planning to ensure that:
  - the schemes of work provide regular and sufficient coverage to all aspects of the music curriculum, and promote and secure students' musical progression
  - sufficient opportunities are planned to improve singing and to make musical use of ICT in Key Stage 3
- developing more rapidly the emerging partnership links with primary schools and Bradford Music Service so that the increasing number of students involved in music activities can be sustained and increased.

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

**Marianne Young**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**