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Mr Jonathan Winch
Principal
Emmanuel College
Consett Road
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Dear Mr Winch

Ofsted 2012–13 good practice survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 3 May 2012 with Marianne Young HMI to look at work in music and particularly the impact of your partnership work with The Sage, Gateshead.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting, including the forthcoming report on music education partnerships (commissioned as part of the National Plan for Music Education). 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 you, the college staff, the vocal leader and the Head of Schools Programme at The Sage, and the founder-sponsor of your college; scrutiny of relevant documentation, including lesson plans, and participation and examination data; and observations of class music lessons and singing sessions.

Features of good practice

- A key reason for the success of your partnership with The Sage is that it has been sustained over three years. Starting with a vocal project, instigated by the college's founder-sponsor, the partnership has grown and has recently been extended to include project work with the Northern Sinfonia. You have rightly recognised that sustaining the partnership has been essential in ensuring that it has a lasting legacy.
- The partnership has directly raised the profile and quality of singing throughout the college. It is hugely beneficial that all Year 7 students take part in a weekly singing session, led by the vocal leader from The Sage, in addition to their class music lesson. Their attitudes to singing and to music

are very good; in a Year 7 class lesson observed, lower-ability students were making good progress in developing their melodic understanding, helped by the college music teacher's confident use of Kodaly hand-signals.

- The whole-school choral group 'One Voice' performs in popular music styles with panache and enthusiasm. Both this and the Year 7 singing sessions are led with tremendous energy and excellent modelling by the vocal leader from The Sage.
- It is significant that the college has not relied solely on this partnership for the development of music. It is commendable that a highly subsidised tuition scheme, taught by peripatetic teachers employed directly by the college, has resulted in significantly increased numbers learning instruments and succeeding in Associated Board music examinations. Other improvements include an increase in the numbers opting to take GCSE music; in 2011, the proportion taking the examination was twice the national average.
- The success of the partnership arrangement is due in no small part to the support from the board of directors and the senior leadership team. As well as providing substantial, sustained funding for the partnership, the work is closely monitored to ensure that students gain good benefits, including access to other opportunities at The Sage such as weekend workshops and attendance at Northern Sinfonia concerts. However, you rightly recognise that there remains more to be done, particularly in ensuring the equal participation of students from non-White British backgrounds and students in receipt of free school meals.

Areas for further development, which we discussed, include:

- exploring, with The Sage, how the vocal repertoire employed could be extended to embrace a greater range of musical styles including from the Western art-music tradition
- strengthening the arrangements for quality assuring the work of your instrumental teachers, including through formal lesson observations
- from September 2012, building stronger links with the local music hub to gain a better understanding of the Wider Opportunities work in primary schools, enable your students to benefit from the hub funding and to share your college's work and experience with other local schools.

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.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector