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Mr A Croft  
Headteacher  
Charles Darwin Community Primary School  
Darwin Street  
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Dear Mr Croft

### **Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: music**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 31 May 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: interviews with staff and pupils; a meeting with the head, the regional manager and music tutors from Cheshire West and Chester Music Service; scrutiny of relevant documentation; and observation of four class lessons and a 'Wider Opportunities' instrumental lesson, videos of peripatetic music teaching and an extra-curricular music club.

The overall effectiveness of music is satisfactory.

### **Achievement in music**

Achievement in music is satisfactory.

- The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress in their musical development from starting points that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. Although their progress varies across the school, overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in music and achieve broadly average standards by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Pupils sing with confidence and demonstrate an appropriate understanding of rhythm. However, pupils' singing lacks security in pitching particularly in the higher register and the quality of tone lacks refinement. This is because singing is not systematically and regularly developed in all lessons.

- School productions and singing events, enabling pupils to perform to different audiences, are appreciated and valued by those who take part. These help to build pupils' self-confidence and esteem. The overall proportion of pupils involved in additional instrumental tuition and extra curricular activities is satisfactory. However, the school and music service are both aware that currently pupils are not able to continue with instrumental tuition on the violin or cello following the 'Wider Opportunities' programme in Year 5.
- The school is successful in ensuring the equal participation of all groups of pupils. Music is viewed equally enthusiastically by girls and boys and the school has a number of case studies which demonstrate positive impact as a result of participation in music on the personal and social development of pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable.

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

The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory.

- Working relationships are positive and teachers successfully engage pupils in music lessons where routines are well established, and pupils display good levels of cooperation. In more successful lessons, pupils spend the majority of time making music, for example in a Year 3 lesson pupils were engaged from the very beginning in developing rhythmic patterns. Effective use of a teaching assistant meant that pupils' misconceptions were identified by listening to their music-making and addressed appropriately. However, in other lessons these opportunities are often limited by too much verbal explanation rather than teachers and pupils demonstrating what they understand through music.
- The school has developed a system for assessing pupils' progress in music this year. However, leaders recognise that the current criteria are not sufficiently detailed to support teachers' accurate assessment of the quality of pupils' musical outcomes and plan more effectively to ensure better progression and development of musical skills and knowledge.
- Pupils in Year 5 are taught the violin or cello as part of the 'Wider Opportunities' programme. These whole-class instrumental lessons are taught well with a clear focus on developing musical skills through demonstrations both by the teacher and the pupils.

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

The quality of the curriculum in music is satisfactory.

- The school uses a thematic approach to curriculum planning, incorporating learning across a range of subjects. This ensures that pupils experience a range of musical styles, cultures, genres and periods. However, planning does not identify clearly enough the expected outcomes and the progression in music learning, particularly the musical skills and understanding that pupils are to build on and develop throughout each key stage. For example, curriculum plans for Year 6 do not build on the programme of instrumental lessons in Year 5.

- The school makes use of a range of the 'Wider Opportunities' programme to support musical provision in the school. In addition to an extra-curricular club for Key Stage 1 pupils, the school's 'Young Voices' participate in a massed singing event with other school from the North West and other singing opportunities exist in the school.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is satisfactory.

- All those involved in leading and managing music bring drive and enthusiasm to their roles. They value the subject and ensure that it is generally well resourced. The subject leader provides support for staff and he is well supported by senior leaders. You have monitored the provision in the 'Wider Opportunities' programme with the local music service manager, but monitoring of classroom music provision has not yet been established.
- Questionnaires to evaluate pupils' attitudes to music have been used to help identify priorities. While the current development plans for music focus on ensuring engagement and participation, the focus on raising standards and developing teachers' understanding of the progression of skills and knowledge is less well developed.
- The school is currently engaged in discussions to enable pupils who learn the violin and cello to be able to continue lessons after Year 5.

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

- developing schemes of work and assessment procedures to ensure that:
  - pupils' musical skills and knowledge are systematically planned and developed as they move through the school
  - sufficient guidance is provided about the quality of outcomes required if pupils are to make better progress
- sharing best practice across the school and accessing professional development to enable all teachers to:
  - further develop their understanding of the progression and development of musical skills and knowledge
  - model their expectations musically
  - assess accurately pupils' musical attainment and progress.

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**