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20 July 2012

Mrs L Farrow
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Farrow

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 27 June 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 pupils; a meeting with the head of Suffolk County Music Service; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of seven lessons, all of which were jointly observed, individual instrumental lessons and a singing assembly.

The overall effectiveness of music is good.

Achievement in music

Achievement in music is good.

- A varied programme of music activities, including singing and using musical instruments, involves and engages children successfully, in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, their responses remain well below age-related expectations.
- From this low base, most pupils are now making good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2, although standards remain below average by the end of Year 6, particularly in singing. This is because, prior to this year, singing had a much lower profile within the school, compared to other aspects of music. Inspection evidence shows that pupils sing with confidence and awareness of other parts, although their pitch sometimes lacks accuracy when pupils move to the higher registers. When working creatively, pupils

make musical decisions confidently, for example discussing how sounds could be combined or how different rhythmic patterns could work together.

- The school supports pupils' musical interests in ensemble performance by setting up recorder groups and enabling pupils to perform regularly, particularly those who learn instruments out of school. Involvement with 'Wider Opportunities' has also widened access. However, participation in individual and small group instrumental tuition remains limited.

Quality of teaching in music

The quality of teaching in music is good.

- In the majority of lessons, pupils understand what they are to learn, their progress in lessons is reviewed regularly and appropriate challenge, for pupils with different musical abilities, is evident. Pupils display strong working relationships with their peers and teachers. Music modelling by both teachers and pupils is used well which enables pupils to demonstrate their understanding musically.
- A very few inaccuracies in teachers' subject knowledge were observed, and consequently inaccuracies by pupils are not always corrected. Audio recordings are made at the end of most units of work, but better use could be made of these to help pupils listen to and make improvements to their compositions.
- During the whole-class instrumental lessons for Year 4 pupils, the teachers' enthusiasm and pupils' enjoyment is evident. However, at times pupils struggle to follow the teachers' directions because musical terminology is not always clarified and their understanding checked before moving to the next part of the lesson.

Quality of the curriculum in music

The quality of the curriculum in music is good.

- Music lessons are linked to a class topic theme which includes a range of other subjects. Clear evidence shows that all aspects of music, including singing, are being taught regularly and this is enabling pupils to make progress as they move through the school.
- A good variety of sound sources are provided, including information and communication technology (ICT) programs, African djembe drums, as well as the more traditional tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments. Pupils are regularly involved in school productions, concerts and whole-school assemblies. During the assemblies, particularly, they are able to perform their class music to their peers as well as giving individual performances.
- For the last four years, all pupils in Year 4 have taken part in the whole-class violin lessons as part of the 'Wider Opportunities' initiatives. In addition, they continue to sing and compose as part of their instrumental learning. Plans are in place to extend this provision to pupils in Year 5 from September.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in music

The effectiveness of leadership and management in music is good.

- All those involved in leading and managing music bring much enthusiasm and commitment to their roles. The subject is valued by them and they recognise, rightly, that music is important within the curriculum and to the whole child. Staff share a common sense of purpose and music plays a significant part in pupils' lives. Barriers which restrict pupils' involvement in music are removed, where possible, so that all can take part in music events.
- The new subject leader has brought enthusiasm and understanding to her role. She has sought appropriate training from the local authority and the information gained from these courses is then used to support and develop class teachers' confidence when teaching music. Consequently the overall quality of teaching has improved significantly, despite a few remaining weaknesses.
- The music development plan is used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of current provision. Information about the progress made by individual pupils is collected regularly; leaders recognise, rightly, that the current system is over-complicated.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- continuing to support all staff so that any remaining issues can be overcome by:
 - making sure that any inaccuracies in subject knowledge are corrected
 - using audio recordings regularly so that pupils know how to improve their work
- broadening the range of instrumental lessons and ensemble groups available in partnership, as appropriate, with Suffolk Music Service
- simplifying the way that information about pupils' musical progress is recorded.

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