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25 January 2008

Mr H Freed
Headteacher
Nower Hill High School
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Dear Mr Freed

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in Music

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 21-22 January 2008 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 made included: discussions with members of staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of lessons and extra-curricular activities.

Features of good practice observed

- All staff and senior management demonstrate impressive openness and desire for constant improvement. Self-evaluation procedures are rigorous, well managed and lead to accurate judgements so that appropriate action is taken.
- Pupils rightly express high praise for the music provision highlighting the way every pupil feels involved and valued in music lessons.
- Standards and achievement in lessons and extra-curricular activities are always at least good and there is an excellent range of opportunities for pupils to develop their musical interests. Expectations were of the highest order in all the instrumental lessons seen.
- Teaching is always at least good and there are many features of outstanding practice. For example, one teacher explored the same task with the class, sharing her own composition alongside those being developed by the pupils. Work was made relevant by asking pupils to create a dance mix for sale at the Year 10 end of year disco. Excellent use is made of ICT resources including the interactive whiteboard and the school's own intranet.

- Excellent systems for collecting information about pupils' involvement and progress have been developed, and continue to be refined. The school was quickly able to provide information about different groups of pupils to confirm that the provision for music is inclusive.
- The music team is fully aware of national initiatives in music and makes good use of an eclectic range of different approaches.
- The school provides strong support for music. The size of the music team has been cleverly increased through broadening roles to include instrumental teaching and work in the community.

Areas for development

As we discussed, the provision in the school could be further improved by:

- building on the well developed assessment procedures by recording and sharing pupils' work more frequently so that it is an integral part of music making
- refining the learning objectives to give more emphasis to the musical understanding that is demonstrated through practical work so that higher levels in Key Stage 3 can be accessed and achieved
- exploring ways to provide more opportunity for pupils to develop their creative skills, for example, through extended sessions.

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

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Tony Knight
Her Majesty's Inspector