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Mr G Oliver  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Oliver

### Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 04-05 February 2008. At the end of the inspection I fed back my judgements and this letter is to confirm my findings.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the extent to which every pupil is benefiting from your music provision. It also explored the links you have developed with other schools and agencies, such as the local Music Service.

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 unless to highlight exceptional practice. In such circumstances the school would be contacted prior to publication to agree the exact wording. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: discussions with members of staff, pupils and a representative of the local high school, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of extra-curricular activities and music lessons.

The overall effectiveness of music is good, with outstanding features. The school's strong commitment to promoting music for all pupils results in above average standards with pupils making at least good progress. The enthusiasm and commitment of staff means that pupils are very motivated to become involved in musical activities, and the impact of music on their personal development is outstanding.

## Achievement and Standards

Achievement and standards are good. Many pupils demonstrate good levels of skill on a range of instruments taught in the school, for example, keyboard, guitar, drum kit, and clarinet, as well as classroom percussion.

- Pupils enjoy music lessons and achieve well. They make good, and sometimes excellent, progress in developing practical music making skills as they move through the school.
- The musical knowledge, understanding and skills of many pupils are very effectively enhanced through involvement in instrumental lessons and a range of extra-curricular activities. It is clear that some pupils are extremely competent performers and make outstanding progress.
- The challenging level of work means that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make at least good progress. Pupils show a genuine readiness to engage positively with a good variety of musical genres and traditions.
- Outcomes for pupils, in terms of the impact of music on their personal development, are outstanding. Pupils speak openly about how participation in musical activities has had a very positive impact on their confidence and self esteem. The emphasis on group work leads to pupils developing particularly good team-working skills, which prepares them well for future education and the world of work.

## Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Practical music making is at the heart of almost all lessons, and pupils are given good opportunities to explore and create.

- The head of music is extremely enthusiastic and energetic, and relationships with pupils are excellent. She has high expectations and the great majority of pupils rise to the challenge.
- The most able pupils are identified and their skills are used well. The less able are generally well supported.
- There is suitable emphasis on self-evaluation and peer evaluation. Pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work. There are good systems to measure progress during lessons, and pupils have a good awareness of their own ability levels and those of others.
- The contribution of other staff very effectively enriches classroom provision. For example, a wind band rehearsal was exceptionally well led; there was much emphasis on aural development and improvisation as well as reading notation.
- Use of information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory. Pupils occasionally use notation software, but other use of music technology, particularly for creative purposes, is limited.

## Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

The overall quality of the curriculum is good. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to benefit from their involvement in vocal and instrumental work.

- Music plays an extremely important role in the school community. Pupils clearly benefit from the specialist input, as shown by their above average standards. The music curriculum meets all statutory requirements and effectively meets the needs of all.
- Schemes of work reflect progression across the years, and there is sufficient flexibility to modify schemes of work in order to best meet pupils' needs.
- There are numerous opportunities for pupils to sing and play together, both in and out of lessons, with much emphasis on vocal work in the classroom.
- Extra-curricular activities are very popular with pupils. There is some musical activity taking place every lunch-time, with additional activities being run after school. Pupils are happy with the variety offered, and activities such as rock band contrast well with groups such as choir and the ceilidh band.
- The school recognises that there is further scope for the development of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils who are not familiar with staff notation. For example, future work on steel pans is being considered.

## Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good. The head of music is strongly committed to her work in the school. Self-evaluation shows a good awareness of strengths and areas for development.

- There is a clear vision for music. The school's senior management team is very supportive of the head of music, and all are fully aware that music is a significant strength of the school's work.
- The head of music and senior management team have an accurate overview of the effectiveness of all practitioners.
- The new school building is very well resourced in terms of spaces for music making, and these are well used during lessons. There are also good resources in terms of amplifiers, recording equipment and electronic keyboards.

## Subject issue: Partnership Links

- Some outstanding partnership work is evident. Particularly impressive is the school's involvement with the local 'pyramid' of schools, which is clearly mutually beneficial. Work carried out with the local high school has an extremely positive impact on pupils' musical and personal

development. For instance, a wind band rehearsal, involving over 80 pupils from the local pyramid of schools, was exemplary in terms of its impact on learning, and as a result pupils made outstanding progress.

- A range of music professionals make a significant contribution to music in the school.

## Inclusion

- The school works hard to ensure all pupils have access to all that the school has to offer musically, including providing support, where necessary, for those who wish to have instrumental lessons.
- All pupils are invited to join in school productions, and many pupils benefit greatly from their involvement. The school is aware of the need to provide more regular activities for pupils who have less developed music reading skills.
- Staff recognise the significant contribution music can make in enhancing the lives of particular pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing extra-curricular instrumental opportunities for pupils who are not familiar with staff notation
- extending the use of ICT in music for creative purposes.

I very much hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop music in your school.

As I explained in my previous letter, 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.

In 6-12 months after the inspection visit, we would like to gather information on the impact of this inspection on the improvements in this subject in your school. To this end you may be contacted by telephone or sent a questionnaire to complete. We appreciate your co-operation in this evaluation.

Yours sincerely

Julie Price Grimshaw  
Additional Inspector