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Miss M Ashwood
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Ashwood

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 22 January 2009. 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 any links you have developed with other schools and agencies.

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 and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, observation of class lessons, observation of two instrumental lessons, the Key Stage 2 singing assembly, and the drumming workshop.

The overall effectiveness of music is inadequate. The central reason for pupils' inadequate musical progress is poor curriculum planning and coverage. The school's topic-based curriculum for the foundation subjects does not take account of pupils' musical development and, in particular, there are insufficient opportunities for them to play instruments or develop their creative skills. Whilst a small number of pupils benefit from additional tuition and perform in ensembles, the majority are not benefiting as they should from music.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are inadequate.

- When they start school, children have limited musical experience and awareness. For example, in the Reception class, many are hesitant or reluctant when encouraged to join in familiar songs. By Key Stage 2, pupils sing with confidence and enjoyment. However, despite the enthusiasm and musical interest that they show - for example, during the singing assembly and the visiting drumming workshop - their musical progress is inadequate. There are insufficient curriculum opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding, particularly through playing instruments and creating musical ideas, and standards are well below expectation at the end of Key Stage 2.
- A few children are learning to play a musical instrument with visiting specialist teachers. The choir, handbells group, and recorder club enable a small number to enjoy ensemble performance activities, but there are insufficient opportunities for all pupils within the curriculum.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is inadequate.

- Class teachers have sound generic teaching skills and demonstrate confidence when leading singing. Some class teachers have good personal musical skills. Individual lessons are thoroughly planned to include practical musical activity. However, too much time is spent by teachers explaining and discussing rather than involving pupils in the musical activity itself.
- Working relationships are positive and pupils are keen to learn. However, teachers typically praise pupils effusively for their participation, rather than helping them to improve by correcting their performance.
- There are no assessments made of pupils' musical progress and audio recordings are not made of pupils' work. As a result, there is insufficient tracking of pupils' progress and pupils have no feedback on how well they are achieving in music.
- Very good teaching and learning was seen in a steel pans small-group lesson, where the teacher skilfully integrated and developed pupils' listening skills with demanding performance work. Consequently, pupils quickly gained in musical confidence and understanding, as well as developing important teamwork skills.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

The overall quality of the curriculum and extra-curricular provision is inadequate.

- The school's 'creative curriculum' is organised into themed projects, with music being taught alongside other foundation subjects. Whilst project planning identifies opportunities for using musical activities to enrich and enliven the topics, there is insufficient consideration of the depth, breadth and development of musical experiences necessary to meet statutory requirements and, most importantly, ensure that pupils make musical progress.
- There are inadequate resources for teaching music. The range of classroom instruments is too narrow and includes very few tuned instruments. There is no use of information and communication technology for music in Key Stage 2.
- Visiting teachers provide lessons for a small number of pupils on steel pans and brass instruments. However, the school is not yet benefiting from the wider musical opportunities supported by the Standards Fund.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are inadequate.

- Before the inspection, the creative curriculum coordinator had already identified that there was insufficient provision for music within the new topic-based curriculum. The music action plan clearly recognises the issues highlighted in this inspection report.
- The music action plan also rightly recognises that there is insufficient and ineffective monitoring of the quality of planning and teaching or promotion of more effective learning in music throughout the school.

Subject Issues

Partnership Links

- The school has well-established links with the music service to provide the steel pan and brass tuition. There are plans to buy-in to the music service's wider opportunities programme from September 2009. However, there are no curriculum links with secondary schools.

Inclusion

- The curriculum and other provision do not enable all pupils to benefit from music. In lessons, there is not enough consideration of the needs of pupils who find learning or participation difficult, nor is there enough extension of the more able pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the thematic-based curriculum includes robust planning for pupils' musical development, including instrumental work and opportunities for creating music, and that this curriculum is properly resourced
- ensuring that both the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning is monitored effectively to promote the musical development of pupils throughout the school
- providing opportunities for pupils to benefit from the wider opportunities in music supported by the Standards Fund.

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

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector