

29 September 2008

Mr T Benson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Benson

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 24 September 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 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, discussions with the Music Service, scrutiny of relevant documentation, scrutiny of audio and video recordings, and observation of lessons and the Key Stage 2 choir rehearsal.

The overall effectiveness of music is good. Although overall standards are below average by the end of Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress from their starting points. Well-taught singing work and the instrumental teaching programmes give children the musical skills and confidence that allow them to continue enjoying and achieving in class lessons, even when teaching is not as confident.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are good.

- In the Foundation Stage, children's musical and creative development is exceptionally behind than that expected for their age. Many are only just beginning to join in singing familiar songs. Good curriculum opportunities help

them to reach standards that, although below average overall, represent good achievement for these pupils by the end of Key Stage 2.

- Pupils make good progress in playing instruments. Numbers of pupils participating in additional tuition and extra-curricular activities are broadly average but improving rapidly, and all groups are represented. The annual musical productions involve every pupil in the school.
- Progress in singing is outstanding. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils sing enthusiastically, in tune, and with good diction. There is some two-part singing but this is not as secure.
- Music plays an important part in improving pupils' self-esteem, their enjoyment and their confidence in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about how music has helped them learn in other lessons such as literacy and numeracy.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with good features.

- Lessons are well-planned and working relationships are always positive. In the best lessons, tasks are structured to help pupils learn progressively, step-by-step. Most lessons focus appropriately on practical music-making and the development of listening skills. Instrumental and singing programmes are led very well.
- Whilst class teachers have a good range of musical skills and interests, too often the pace of their teaching is not fast enough. Too much time is spent explaining or describing, rather than demonstrating or leading musically. Similarly, the rapidly improving musical standards that pupils are gaining in other curriculum experiences are not always matched by appropriately higher expectations in these lessons. Although children always enjoy their class music sessions, this prevents them from achieving even higher standards.
- Good use is made of recordings to celebrate and evaluate instrumental performances and school concerts, but much less use is made of recording pupils' class work.
- Teaching assistants make an important and valuable contribution to class lessons, particularly by helping the most vulnerable pupils to participate fully.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

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

- A published scheme of work is used throughout the school by class teachers. Additional singing sessions are led by the music coordinator. The whole-class instrumental programmes in Years 2 and 3 are well thought-through and give pupils a particularly good foundation for further learning.
- Additional cross-curricular projects are thoroughly planned and include robust expectations for the development of musical skills and understanding.
- There is a good range of individual instrumental tuition. There is a good selection of classroom instruments available for curriculum work. Excellent sound systems are provided throughout the school as well as a new, dedicated performance area. However, provision for using information and communication technology (ICT) is not well-developed.

- The choir and orchestra provide good opportunities for pupils across the school to sing and play together in the school, local, and Greater London communities.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are good.

- There is a strong commitment to music and the school has invested heavily to ensure that every child is able to participate, whatever their background. Excellent support is given to the music co-ordinator, who has recently gained Advanced Skills Teacher status and who herself gives good support to other teachers. Resources are managed well, and there is regular monitoring of class music lessons.
- Self evaluation is good. The school knows exactly what is needed to improve provision further and the rapid improvements seen in recent years indicate good capacity for further improvement.
- One area correctly identified for improvement is assessment. Whilst teachers know their pupils well and use effective strategies to help and improve their work during lessons, systems for monitoring pupils' progress in class music lessons across the school are underdeveloped.

Subject Issues

Partnership Links

- There are outstanding links with the Borough Music Service to provide the instrumental teaching programmes and extra-curricular ensembles. Through the music coordinator, the school has recently formed a partnership with schools in a neighbouring authority to develop vocal work further through the national Sing Up scheme.

Inclusion

- Inclusion in music is outstanding. Pupils from all groups are represented and supported well in all musical activities, including instrumental and vocal work, and everyone's participation is encouraged. This is a considerable achievement in such a large and diverse community.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that class teachers consistently challenge pupils, taking account of the higher standards and rapid progress that they make through other musical experiences
- developing opportunities for pupils to use ICT in class music lessons, and the use of recordings to assess and appraise their work
- improving systems for monitoring pupils' progress in music as they move through the school.

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