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Mr W Marshall
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Marshall

Ofsted 2012–13 good practice survey inspection programme: music

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 4 July 2012 to look at work in music and particularly the impact of your partnership work with the Musical Bridges initiative, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. My visit also provided the opportunity to consider progress made by the school since the music subject survey inspection of March 2010.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting, including the forthcoming report on music education partnerships (commissioned as part of the National Plan for Music Education). 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: interviews with staff and students; a visit to your new intake evening, where I was able to talk to parents and carers; scrutiny of relevant documentation; a discussion with you, your staff, colleagues from feeder primary schools and a consultant from Musical Bridges; and observation of two Year 8 lessons.

Features of good practice

- Musical Bridges is a national initiative that brings together music teachers and senior leaders in partner primary and secondary schools with the aim of strengthening students' experiences of transition from Year 6 to Year 7 through music. This is the second year that the project has been running at Humphry Davy and feeder primary schools.
- It is clear that the project has been catalytic in removing musical and social barriers for students and staff. Visits to each other's schools, with reciprocal lesson observations and professional discussions, have built a shared understanding about good musical pedagogy between primary and secondary music coordinators, and developed a great deal of respect for each other's practise. Because so many students (and, indeed, their parents and carers) have been involved in ongoing music activities such as

the Transition Band and Choir, the transfer progress has been much smoother, and less threatening and worrying. Many Year 6 pupils are remarkably confident and supremely optimistic about joining Humphry Davy in September because they already play a part in the school's musical life. It is noticeable, though, that although all pupils in the participating primary schools are involved in the 'Passengers' class music project, not all groups are represented in the Transition Band and Choir. Pupils known to be in receipt of free school meals and pupils with special education needs are significantly underrepresented. This is surprising, given the excellent attention given to musical inclusion at one of your feeder schools and at Humphry Davy.

- The school has made outstanding progress in tackling the areas for improvement from the subject survey inspection two years ago. The curriculum offer has been thoroughly revised, with a much broader range of cultural styles included and the reintroduction of the GCSE music course. The lead teacher of music has been given one day each fortnight to monitor the instrumental teaching programme and this, together with his strong classroom practice, ensures that there is a very good focus on the quality of provision. The success of this work is seen in the increased take-up for music at Key Stage 4. The proportion of students opting for GCSE music is now over three times the national average, which is a remarkable achievement. The participation of boys, including in the choirs, is excellent. Self-evaluation remains good; you rightly recognise that, to raise musical standards even further, greater consideration must be given to the way that students' musical skills and understanding are progressed as they move through the school. With shared curriculum development and provision at the heart of the Musical Bridges philosophy, this provides a good opportunity to work with partner primary schools in agreeing key landmarks of musical understanding that students might be expected to achieve as they move through Key Stages 1 to 3.

Areas for further development, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that pupils from all groups are able to participate in the Transition Band and Transition Choir
- in partnership with primary schools and Musical Bridges, developing an overarching curriculum map that shows very clearly the landmarks of musical understanding that students are expected to achieve as they progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 3.

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

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector