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14 December 2010

Ms S Bishop
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Dear Ms Bishop

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: art, craft and design

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils during my visit on 7 November 2010 to look at work in art, craft and design.

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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: discussions with senior leaders and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of three lessons and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The overall effectiveness of art, craft and design is satisfactory.

Achievement in art, craft and design

Pupils' achievement in art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- From broadly typical starting points, children in Nursery and Reception make excellent progress in developing creative skills. They are immersed in a highly stimulating environment that encourages, supports and promotes creativity.
- As pupils move into Year 1 the very large majority have reached a good level of achievement in creative development. Their rapid progress slows from this point mainly because teaching is less adventurous and there are no securely established effective systems to track pupils' progress over time.

- From Year 1 to Year 6 pupils make satisfactory progress and their work is representative of that which would usually be expected for their ages. Their drawing develops satisfactorily although work in the sketchbooks shows that pupils have insufficient opportunity to develop their skills by practising sophisticated techniques.
- Boys and girls enjoy the subject and apply themselves well in lessons. In Years 1 and 2, pupils worked with stalwart concentration and perseverance while making models of the Gruffalo from clay.
- Pupils are introduced to a wide range of media which they apply satisfactorily. They have adequate knowledge of the work of artists, designers and craftworkers and benefit from working alongside living artists. Their limited use of subject-specific vocabulary constrains their ability to express their ideas about their own and others' art articulately.
- Outcomes of pupils' clay work are above average because pupils use clay frequently from an early age; the school has a kiln and expertise from the subject leader has equipped staff with the skills and confidence to use clay competently.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

The quality of teaching of art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- Teaching is organised proficiently and planned with pupils' interests in mind, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Explanations are clear and staff use technical language suitably in teaching; this is good where teachers are specialists in the subject. However, staff do not always encourage pupils sufficiently to do the same.
- Lessons move along at a satisfactory pace often with several mini-plenaries to reinforce teaching points and deepen pupils' understanding.
- In EYFS, record keeping of children's progress is exemplary. Adults use the information adeptly to pinpoint gaps in pupils' learning and to organise activities that will strengthen weaknesses. Assessment in the main school is in the early stages of development.
- Pupils are actively encouraged to evaluate their own work and that of others but their narrow repertoire of visual literacy is a constraint.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

The quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- The curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. It provides children with an exceptionally broad range of experiences that generates creative thinking and originality. Individual interests are catered for expertly; in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils are encouraged to identify what they would like to learn or try.
- Pupils participate enthusiastically in creative activities, inspired by sculptors, artists, the natural world, customs, cultures and traditions.

- A new curriculum has recently been introduced in Key Stages 1 and 2 that ensures progression through systematic teaching of skills; staff are becoming familiar with it.
- The curriculum is relevant and staff are developing themes that appeal to girls and boys to increase their engagement. Currently art work is inspired through literature that pupils are studying.
- Forest School is used widely as an outdoor classroom where creativity is encouraged. The school setting is in an area of exceptional natural beauty and this is used widely as a source of inspiration.
- Art Week is enjoyed by the whole school community and provides opportunities for pupils to pursue processes in depth often supported by contributions from contemporary artists.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of art, craft and design

The leadership and management of art, craft and design are satisfactory.

- Leadership is driven by a resolve to raise standards, a passion for the subject and the valuing of creativity.
- New federation arrangements with the local high school have strengthened capacity for improvement. Strong leadership has created acceptance of whole-school accountability by all staff for pupils' achievement.
- Systematic approaches to monitoring and evaluation have been introduced recently with clearly communicated expectations for subject leadership. Subject-specialist advice from the art and design department is readily available for staff to tap into, for example in assessing and moderating attainment.
- Subject leadership is beginning to focus on teaching and its impact on learning. The subject leader is beginning to extend her influence and expertise beyond the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Assessment has rightly been identified as an area for improvement in order to raise standards and potential approaches are under consideration.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- Raise attainment in Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
 - improving pupils' visual literacy so that they are able to evaluate their own work and that of others confidently and articulately
 - extending pupils' knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, designers and craftworkers from different times and continents
 - developing pupils' use of sketchbooks to practise and refine their drawing skills and to explore the potential of media

- develop the subject leader’s role in monitoring and evaluating provision and its impact on pupils’ achievement beyond the Early Years Foundation Stage.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop art, craft and design in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty’s Inspector