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Ms L McGarrity  
Acting Headteacher  
St Mary's Catholic Primary School  
Woodside Way  
Northampton  
NN5 7HX

Dear Ms McGarrity

**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 27 January 2011 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of four lessons jointly with you.

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 very low starting points when pupils start school in Reception, they make satisfactory progress. They develop adequate subject knowledge, skills and understanding to reach standards that are broadly typical of pupils in similar schools by the end of Year 6.
- They use materials, processes and techniques appropriately to communicate their ideas although their proficiency in three-dimensional work is less well developed.
- A few pupils demonstrate precision in talking about their work and that of other artists. The large majority are able to describe their preferences and reasons for them, but do not use technical terms routinely within their normal talk.

- Pupils draw confidently from memory, imagination and through direct observation of manufactured objects and natural forms. They are able to focus on parts of an object to develop observation and interpretative skills. Pupils have used sketchbooks widely in the past to develop and explore ideas; the school is aware that pupils do not currently develop their work sufficiently through use of good quality sketchbooks.
- Pupils develop sound understanding of a suitable range of artists' work and are able to identify the characteristics of art from continents other than Europe.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and are responsive to the guidance and support that adults offer. They work with sustained interest and show cooperation when sharing resources. They organise their own work spaces proficiently.
- Pupils say that they enjoy the freedom to experiment that the subject provides.

### **Quality of teaching of art, craft and design**

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

- Teaching seen in the inspection was good. Teachers show enthusiasm for the subject which is conveyed strongly to pupils. Sources of inspiration are well-chosen and researched.
- Planning is good. It is thorough. Teaching points and key vocabulary are indicated and pupils' attention is drawn to them. Steps to success are communicated to help pupils to assess how well they are doing through the lesson. Teachers plan with their extensive knowledge of pupils' differing abilities in mind so that the work is pitched at the right level for all to succeed with sufficient challenge.
- Assessment opportunities in lessons are frequent. Assessment for learning strategies are employed successfully enabling pupils to participate in the process. The school does not currently have a system for recording formative assessment regularly so that it can be referred to in retrospect.
- Relationships are excellent in all respects. Pupils communicate confidently and politely with all staff as they work. Pupils trust the adults who quickly intervene to help them to overcome barriers to success. Pupils are included in this and invited to offer advice.
- Information and communication technology is used effectively by staff to capture pupils' interests. Visualisers are used imaginatively for demonstration purposes.

### **Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design**

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

- The pupils benefit from first-hand experiences where learning is often set in real-world contexts.

- Requirements of the curriculum are met satisfactorily and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Pupils develop their ideas through research and compilation of visual material. Nonetheless, they do not currently use sketchbooks to develop this approach.
- Meaningful links with other subjects are developing well through the school's revised curriculum. A published skills-based curriculum has been adopted which ensures progression and coverage of the National Curriculum for art and design.
- Pupils have an adequate breadth of experiences. Opportunities to work in three dimensions and with textiles are limited. They have opportunities to be involved in community projects such as exhibiting designs in the local shopping centre. They have worked with artists, albeit rarely.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management of art, craft and design**

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

- Frequent changes in senior leadership in the recent past have had an impact on subject leadership. Nonetheless, the standards have been maintained through creative and passionate leadership by an art specialist.
- Capacity for improvement is satisfactory, demonstrated by the school's success in retaining average standards during a period of considerable turbulence when staff were under pressure to focus almost exclusively on literacy and numeracy. New leadership is swiftly returning to a balanced approach to curriculum coverage ensuring that the pupils' entitlement in the subject is preserved.
- Self-evaluation of the quality of teaching is accurate. Senior leaders are keen to return to the previous regime where time was allocated to enable the subject leader to evaluate teaching through observation.
- You and the subject leader have a good understanding of where the best practice exists in the school. The local authority uses the Reception class as an exemplar of good practice.
- Resources are well organised and deployed appropriately to bring about improvement. In particular, teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to learning through good support and enthusiasm for the subject.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- raising attainment and accelerating pupils' progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
  - devising an effective system for recording pupils' progress and attainment
  - reinstating pupils' access to and use of sketchbooks
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their skills through three-dimensional work

- ensuring that the subject leader has opportunities to observe teaching and learning at first hand to identify and celebrate best practice and share it among staff, particularly where weaker areas of practice are identified.

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 published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Linda Killman**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**