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Dear Mr Withers

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of staff and pupils, during my visit on 17 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 six part-lessons, including a joint observation with a member of the senior leadership team.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

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

- Children's creative development in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. From lower than expected starting points, most children reach the expected level of attainment by the time they join Year 1. They thoroughly enjoy learning and rapidly gain confidence in exploring different materials.
- Between Years 1 and 6, boys' and girls' progress is satisfactory so that their attainment is in line with that seen nationally by the time they leave. Pupils continue to enjoy the subject, approaching lessons positively.
- In Years 1 to 6 pupils continue to enjoy exploring the properties of different materials and techniques. They develop a satisfactory

understanding of how visual elements, such as line and colour, can be used to record their experiences and communicate their response to them.

- Pupils' knowledge of other creative practitioners' work is satisfactory. They make sound use of what they learn to support their own learning. On the occasions where they experience work directly, such as on gallery visits, their knowledge is developed more securely in supporting their creativity.
- Reflecting on, and refining work is an area of relative weakness for pupils. In lessons, they are not always clear enough about what they are aiming to achieve so as to think purposefully about how to develop their work.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

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

- Teachers are motivated in teaching the subject and work hard to prepare lessons. Teamwork between teachers and additional adults is good, especially in organising resources and managing behaviour.
- Lessons are structured well so that different elements link together well. Teachers and other adults confidently manage transitions between different phases and change activities readily in response to the progress being made.
- In some lessons teachers give effective introductions to practical processes and/or the key features of artists' work being referred to. In these good lessons, discussion is used well to extend pupils' ideas. However, this is not consistent and pupils are sometimes unclear about how best to exploit a particular technique or explore another artist's approach.
- Early Years Foundation Stage staff have a detailed understanding of each child's creative development and plan activities to meet their needs. In older years, teachers have a broadly accurate, but less precise, awareness of pupils' varying attainment and potential in relation to the processes used. As a result, the activities they plan, and the support they give, are targeted less effectively in moving each pupil forward as fast as possible.
- Sketchbooks are used well to record pupils' creative practice. Marking is regular but pupils are not consistently expected to respond to it to develop their work further.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- The breadth of experience offered in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding, involving skilful use of indoor and outdoor areas, ambitious work on varied scales and introduction to key processes such as drawing and mixed-media. The curriculum supporting children's creative development is linked closely to wider curriculum planning.
- Older pupils are offered a good range of experience across different materials and processes, particularly when working two-dimensionally.

Opportunities to work in three-dimensions are less well developed overall, notably not giving pupils a comprehensive introduction to craft processes.

- The subject is linked well to other curriculum areas through topics. Pupils respond well to these connections and say it makes their learning more useful and helps them to remember what they learn. Information and communication technology is developed well through the subject.
- Links to other artists' work are good and include contemporary practice and non-European elements. Visits to museums and galleries support learning well. For example, Year 4 visited a local gallery to see printmaking. Pupils have limited experience of creative practitioners working at first-hand so as to enhance their understanding of the creative process.
- Curriculum enrichment is good. It includes an annual 'artsweek', which is valued by pupils for the possibility to work over an extended period. Some pupils also have opportunities to do a 'mini-university week' working with students and staff from a university on creative projects.
- Good use is made of the canteen area to display pupils' work and pupils benefit from making curatorial decisions about what should be displayed.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of art, craft and design

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

- The subject leader is keen to develop the quality of provision. She is working hard to develop her expertise and that of the staff.
- Subject monitoring yields a sound understanding of strengths and weaknesses. However, the evidence base is too narrow to give a comprehensive picture. Opportunities for the subject leader to observe learning are insufficient, and too little reference is made to assessment data about the progress made by different groups of pupils.
- Subject development planning is satisfactory and focuses on the right areas for improvement. The actions to bring about change are mainly well considered but it is not always clear how pupils will benefit to ensure that the actions taken are proving worthwhile.
- Some good links exist with external partners, such as a nearby secondary school and local museums. Appropriate plans are in place to extend these, particularly to support staff professional development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving pupils' progress by ensuring that they are always clear about what they are trying to achieve with their work so they can take more responsibility for moving their work forward
- enhancing teachers' ability to plan challenging tasks for all pupils by improving their understanding of what individual pupils should be achieving in the processes they use

- enriching pupils' experiences further by giving them experience of creative practitioners, including craft-makers, at work
- increasing the impact of subject leadership on learning by widening the base of evidence used in monitoring provision and ensuring the impact of development initiatives is always measured by its benefit to pupils.

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

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector