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Mrs J Field
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Field

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 2 February 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 pupils and staff, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons jointly with the subject leader.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

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

- On entry the level of children's skills in creative development are slightly lower than is typical, especially in drawing. By the time they leave in Year 6 they develop into creative, independent individuals who express their ideas and feelings confidently through a variety of materials, processes and techniques.
- Most pupils make good progress in lessons and over time. Standards are broadly average in most respects and above average in design and mixed-media. Pupils are adept in using computer software to explore shape, colour and pattern. Their drawing, however, particularly from observation, remains immature and below typical expectations.

- Pupils develop a good understanding of the work of artists, designers and craftworkers, particularly painters, from different times, places and cultures.
- The pupils use sketchbooks well to develop ideas and explore mark-making shape, colour, texture and pattern, which they often develop in future work. Practice in developing techniques in using tone to describe form is infrequent.
- The subject strongly promotes pupils' good and sometimes excellent behaviour. From an early age pupils develop independence in their approach. This is because they are expected to retrieve their own tools and materials. In particular experimentation is high on the learning agenda. Pupils explore the potential of new materials without inhibition.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

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

- Teachers enjoy teaching the subject and invest time in researching art and artefacts as sources of inspiration. They model and demonstrate competently. As a result, teaching strongly promotes exploration, reworking and opportunity for diverse responses.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge of most processes and techniques. They are least confident in teaching drawing skills; a consistent weakness in pupils' attainment.
- Planning is thorough and progression is evident in planned units of work. Similarly, ample time is allocated in lessons for thought, reflection and evaluation. However, the impact of this good practice is limited because the school does not have a formal system in place for recording the outcomes and then comparing them to national expectations.
- Imaginative approaches such as 'warm-up' activities that provoke thought and discussion, appeal to boys and girls. Partner work and collaboration are strongly promoted. Expectations for pupils to work independently and organise their resources are high.
- Information and communication technology is used skilfully to support learning. Supporting adults are deployed effectively. They are fully included in lessons and contribute to class discussions and teachers' introductions.
- Relationships at all levels are excellent. As a result, pupils respond very positively and respectfully to each other and to staff.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- The curriculum is under review with increasing emphasis on combining subjects where relevant within a theme. This is contributing to pupils' high level of enjoyment. For example, a study of World War 2 provided

opportunity for Year 6 pupils to study war artists' work and create their own scenes depicting invasion in a variety of media.

- The subject leader is diligent in checking that progression and coverage of the National Curriculum are protected through the school's new approach to curriculum planning so that all pupils receive their entitlement.
- The pupils are exposed to a broad range of contemporary artists through teachers' well-chosen sources of inspiration, regular visits to galleries, including the National Gallery and through working alongside visiting artists.
- Extra-curricular enrichment activities are good. During theme weeks such as multi-faith and art week, pupils benefit from extended time for in-depth studies. Take-up is high for after school clubs such as the photography club.
- Collaborative events, for teachers, with other local catholic schools are regular features in the school calendar such as batik, papermaking and origami workshops. Gifted and talented pupils are strongly encouraged to attend after school clubs.
- Pupils contribute widely to community art events such as 'Voices and Visions' organised annually by the team from the Elgar Art Centre. The pupils exhibit work alongside others in the 4–19 age range in Worcester cathedral. They visit the exhibition to view and appreciate their own and others' work.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of art, craft and design

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

- The Head Teacher and subject leader are strong promoters of creativity and as a result the subject is valued and staff have license to try new things. You are influential leaders in driving curriculum development and innovation to raise achievement.
- Monitoring and evaluation practices, such as work sampling and learning walks are regular. The subject leader has an accurate view of the subject which is used to inform future planning. Useful feedback is provided for staff particularly on the strengths identified in their teaching; areas for development are not communicated as adeptly.
- Through regular monitoring, the subject leader is aware of where the best practice exists in the school and this is shared widely among staff, both teaching and non-teaching.
- Resources are well-organised and accessible. The subject leader has full control of the art and design budget and seeks staff's views widely before purchasing specialist materials to ensure that they are used profitably.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- To raise attainment, especially in drawing, by:
 - developing a robust system for recording assessment information
 - providing staff with training in teaching drawing skills
 - giving pupils regular opportunities for observational drawing especially in their sketchbooks.

I hope 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