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Headteacher
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Dear Mr Grubisic

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 joint visit with Ian Middleton HMI on 31 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.

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.

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.

- From varied starting points that include some creative experiences before starting school, pupils make steady progress through Reception and Key Stage 1 then flourish in Key Stage 2 where standards rise significantly. By the end of Year 6, pupils' work in colour and design is above average as seen in examples of work inspired by landscapes and design work related to the Viking period. They use pattern intricately to decorate their work.
- Pupils' drawing skills develop satisfactorily in comparison to other aspects of their work. This is because they do not use sketchbooks regularly enough to promote experimentation and to develop their drawing and critical skills.

- Reflection and critical evaluation is an integral part of pupils' learning. As a result, from an early age they are able to discuss their preferences and use technical language accurately in everyday talk.
- Pupils' develop good knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, designers and craftworkers from different times and places. The influence through their studies shows in their work. For example, pupils in Year 4/5 studied the work of a famous fifth generation South American weaver. They used his technique to make looms of different sizes and structures to create their own original weavings using discerning choices of colour.
- Pupils' behave well and work with sustained interest in lessons because they are frequently stimulated by excellent choices of sources for inspiration such as fossils, fashion designs, sculptures and paintings. These arouse pupils' sense of awe and wonder and cultivate their propensity for learning and enjoyment.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

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

- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, demonstrate and model techniques confidently. Where teachers have researched the artists and are clearly inspired themselves their lessons excite, stimulate and challenge boys and girls.
- The quality of planning for some individual lessons is outstanding. This incorporates provision for pupils of all abilities, clear direction for support staff, progression for learning during the lesson and steps for success so that pupils are able to evaluate their work successfully. Nonetheless, the planned objectives that are shared with pupils focus almost exclusively on skills. Guidance for pupils on how to aspire to originality in their work is less explicit. In the best lessons expectations are high and outcomes are unpredictable, reinforced regularly through skilful questioning.
- Assessment is used effectively to base learning on what pupils already know and can do. Planned opportunities for pupils to revisit techniques they have learnt previously, or experiment by combining different media or methods through an open-ended activity, are less prevalent early on.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- The curriculum is structured to ensure good coverage and progression. Pupils develop a strong sense of colour that they use effectively in their work because this element is revisited systematically as they progress through the school. Exploration of line and tone is less frequent and this shows in the average quality of pupils' drawings.
- Planned activities for pupils to work independently are plentiful; those that promote team work and collaboration are fewer. The outdoor environment is not used regularly enough to enable pupils to work on a large scale.

Similarly, outdoor activities for children in Reception do not always provide sufficient challenges to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.

- The school has identified that pupils' experiences of gallery visits and exploration of art from a range of cultures are too limited and plans are already in place to address this.
- Homeworks are used very effectively to encourage pupils to engage in art and design activities at home. These enable parents and carers to contribute to their children's learning and observe their skills developing at first hand. Pupils enjoy bringing in their finished work and displays around the school show some very thorough research and original examples of work inspired through homework activities.
- Provision for pupils with special gifts and talents is good. The school works closely with other local schools and employs a specialist to extend these pupils' experiences and to provide opportunities for them to work with others of similar high ability in a specialist studio.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of art, craft and design

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

- Art and design has a strong presence within the school because of its high value afforded by the headteacher and subject leader. Around the school good quality displays of pupils' and artists' work provoke thought, discussion and reflection.
- The subject leader has an accurate view of the school's work in relation to the national picture. Accurate self-evaluation informs future planning to develop the subject. All identified areas for improvement are given a priority rating to ensure that the most pressing issues are addressed first.
- Subject leadership benefits from regular opportunities to observe teaching and learning at first hand, sample work and seek staff and pupils' views. Relevant and helpful areas for improvement are identified but return visits to evaluate how well these have been addressed, are not happening routinely.
- Approaches used to achieve the subject leader's strong ambition to achieve excellence are innovative. For example, an entrepreneurial initiative is planned to generate funds to finance gallery visits for pupils through sales of their work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing the use of sketchbooks to promote pupils' experimentation, use of drawing and their progress in developing critical skills
- ensuring that the school's policy to promote creativity is explicit to pupils and planned through choices available, and gallery visits that inspire
- providing more opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively on a large scale particularly outdoors.

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 sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector