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Mr R Hothersall
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hothersall

Ofsted 2011–12 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 23 and 24 May 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; observation of two lessons; and a meeting with the local coordinator of the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

Achievement in art, craft and design is good.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the children make excellent progress in their creative development. Their confident mark-making, inventiveness with two and three-dimensional media, and understanding about colour provide a strong start to build on. The canvases created by boys and girls, inspired by fire and water and seasonal colours, displayed in the school's art exhibition, show that pupils are able to attain above average standards.
- Pupils' sketchbooks, displays and records of work indicate that between Years 1 and 6 their progress is inconsistent. Standards are higher when taught by a specialist, including visiting artists, who work with all children

at least annually. For example, their clay work is above average. Pupils create good work when taught new skills, but their later work at the school does not reach the higher levels because their ability to review, revisit and refine techniques is underdeveloped. Where pupils apply their skills in other subjects, progress is better. For example, their use of observational drawing in science, in Year 6.

- Boys and girls are enthusiastic about the subject. They particularly enjoy experimentation and contributing to collaborative pieces of work. Their knowledge and understanding of other artists, craftworkers and designers are most evident when inspired by creative practitioners they have met. However, their work inspired by information and activities related to the work of Christo, has also had significant impact, showing that pupils are capable of understanding challenging concepts.

Quality of teaching in art, craft and design

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

- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is very effective because children's creative work shows that expectations are high, the scale of work is often ambitious, and activities are thoughtfully designed to focus learning on specific visual concepts, such as tone. Assessment is regular, rigorous and well informed through observation of pupils' individual progress in relation to specific objectives.
- Pupils' work overall indicates that the teaching regularly experienced is satisfactory. Assessment provides an adequate indication of pupils' broad attainment, but is not always specific enough to tailor different activities to individual needs. However, teachers and teaching assistants support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities well to help them access and enjoy their lessons. Gifted and talented pupils are challenged through additional teaching by the subject leader.
- Lessons are well prepared. Resources are suitably organised to enable pupils to use appropriate materials for the lesson. In one lesson observed, the teacher used questioning skilfully to ensure that learning in the lesson was consolidated. However, links with learning longer term are not always explicit enough to ensure that pupils build on the skills already learnt, for example through the use of mixed-media.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- The range of two and three-dimensional media experienced by pupils is good. There are wide opportunities to use a range of techniques. Artists, craftworkers and designers, who have used similar stimuli or methods, are linked to different projects satisfactorily, but connections between the work of pupils and creative practitioners are strengthened when living artists who visit the school explain their methods.

- There are excellent links with the locality through reference to the nearby landscape and seascape, and creative practitioners who work in the area. An established partnership with the local pottery illustrates the sustained impact on pupils' standards of work because a particular media is explored in depth, capitalising too on pupils' wider three-dimensional experience.
- Drawing is used in all years, helping to build pupils' confidence in communicating visually. However, sketchbooks could be used more regularly to record observations, develop ideas and research information used in different subjects, particularly design and technology, in order to embed and extend pupils' drawing skills further.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

The effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design is good.

- The subject has a high profile across the school and local community, particularly through exhibitions and the school website which are used strategically to celebrate pupils' achievements. The selection of the school by the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts as a 'centre of excellence' demonstrates the reputation of the school as a strong and reliable partner, able to share achievements publicly and professionally.
- The subject leader shares her passion for the subject with energy and enthusiasm, setting an excellent example through her work in the nursery. Staff are supported through clear documentation and a wide range of training opportunities, including work alongside creative practitioners working with pupils. However, lesson observation is underused to monitor, evaluate and provide feedback about the impact of provision on outcomes.
- Current improvement priorities in the subject are appropriate, focused on raising standards further. The school portfolio is developing as a useful resource, illustrating the standards expected as pupils progress through the school. The subject leader's work with gifted and talented pupils is helping to raise expectations of pupils, through example.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- building on pupils' early and high creative achievements by:
 - teaching pupils how to review, revisit and refine their skills
 - developing the use of sketchbooks to promote continuous drawing
- increasing opportunities for the subject leader to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and achievement as pupils progress through school.

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

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector