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Mr S Baines
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Baines

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 13 June 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 lessons including two in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The overall effectiveness of art, craft and design is good

Achievement in art, craft and design

Achievement in art, craft and design is good

- From average levels of ability in their creative development on entry into Nursery, children make good progress and achieve well by the time they enter Year 1. They are enthralled by the array of activities from which they often choose. It was delightful to see them confidently printing pirate hats or designing a huge pirate island with sand, stones and seaweed.
- Pupils continue to make good progress during their time at the school. Those who lack confidence in the subject or find aspects difficult are supported exceptionally well by adults in class to fully take part and enjoy their activities. The subject contributes well to inclusion.

- By the time they leave Year 6, pupils' achievements in the subject are at least in line with expectations and often above. An identified discrepancy between boys' and girls' achievements is being tackled well by providing more creative aspects in the curriculum to excite and interest all pupils.
- Pupils achieve well in both two- and three-dimensional media. Their skills and creativity in digital media are particularly good because of the many well-planned opportunities they have to experiment in, use and explore the diverse range of equipment and packages available.
- Pupils' behaviour and personal qualities are outstanding because relationships between teachers and pupils and among pupils themselves are exemplary and because they all thoroughly enjoy the subject.

Quality of teaching in art, craft and design

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

- Teaching is never less than good and some is outstanding. Teachers are very enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge. They successfully use demonstration, interactive whiteboards or the digital microscope to discuss learning points or show images and artefacts. Such actions help to maintain pupils' enthusiasm and promote their understanding.
- Techniques and skills are carefully taught and teachers successfully encourage pupils to choose materials to develop ideas from generally similar starting points. Occasionally, the size and choice of materials to put down their ideas limit pupils' development of individual end points.
- The coordinators are aware that while some teachers ensure that pupils use their art books regularly, to reflect on their work and develop their ideas, their use has been inconsistent. Actions are in place to tackle this.
- Regular formal assessment of pupils' work is developing effectively and helping to pitch lessons that match pupils' individual starting points. Teachers' ongoing oral assessment in lessons ensures that pupils always reflect on their work and consider how well they are doing. Pupils say that they particularly value the regular peer-assessment that takes place which they feel is very honest and helps to challenge their thinking.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- The subject is embedded across the full range of interesting topics and is well designed to build pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills progressively. Art weeks, art clubs, the comic club, local visiting artists and craftworkers and visits out of school extend the subject successfully.
- Coordinators constantly seek ways of improving the subject. They are extending pupils' understanding of art from other cultures, for example, through Cultural Days where they experiment in the techniques and styles of Chinese or aboriginal art and through the art projects they are developing with a partner school in Tanzania.

- Pupils talk knowledgeably about the work of artists such as Picasso, Van Gogh and Kandinsky and their influence on their own work. However, the range of artists, designers and craftworkers that pupils study is limited.
- Pupils speak proudly of the opportunities they all have to display their work in the school's two highly respected art galleries where parents and carers are invited to come to celebrate their achievements. The size and form of the high-quality presentation frames sometimes limits pupils' individual decision-making and creative responses.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

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

- The two coordinators are passionate about the subject and its continuing improvement. They spread their enthusiasm and subject knowledge successfully to colleagues and pupils alike; supporting where necessary through coaching, or professional development opportunities like the recent 'hands-on' ceramics evening.
- They have an accurate view of what is working well and what could be better through regular monitoring of planning, teaching and pupils' work. Areas for improvement have been placed in a good, timely action plan which is monitored assiduously. For example, to ensure better impact of sketchbooks, coordinators are currently evaluating their use.
- Coordinators keep up to date with current initiatives in the subject well, through network meetings, professional development opportunities, by increasingly good links with specialists in the local primary and secondary school and by working alongside visiting artists and craftworkers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- extending the range of artists and craftworkers that pupils study and providing more opportunities for them to research artists themselves
- developing the good school art gallery initiative by increasing the range of frames and the type of work that pupils can display so that the full range of pupils' creative achievements is represented.

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

Margaret Farrow
Her Majesty's Inspector