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Mr J Twidle
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Twidle

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: art, craft and design

Thank you for your cooperation, and the hospitality of the assistant head teacher, staff and pupils, during my visit on 6 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 five lessons including two in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

Achievement in art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- Children thrive in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of the wide range of well-planned, exciting activities both indoors and out that challenges their thinking and develops their skills and creativity. Some were seen thoroughly enjoying creating observational paintings of flowers; expertly mixing paints and using their hands, fingers or different shaped brushes to represent the different qualities of leaves, stems and petals.
- From low levels of ability on entry into Nursery, their achievements in creative development are broadly average by the time they enter Year 1.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stages 1 and 2. Their creativity and skills, including their drawing, also develop satisfactorily as a result of carefully planned opportunities to use two- and three-dimensional media.

- Boys and girls make similar progress, as do pupils who have difficulties with some aspects of the subject, because of the school's inclusive approach and the diligent care and guidance provided by teachers and other adults.
- Pupils say that they enjoy the subject and their good behaviour and attitudes pay testament to this. They work conscientiously and equally well on their own or when working with partners.

Quality of teaching in art, craft and design

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

- Good relationships between teachers and pupils typify all lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic and use white boards and artefacts effectively to teach key skills, stimulate pupils' ideas and maintain their interest.
- Lessons are well planned and classrooms well organised. From generally similar starting points, pupils are successfully encouraged to develop their own ideas. Indeed, pupils report that one of the things they like best about the subject is the opportunity to develop ideas for themselves.
- Lessons move along at a steady pace with time allowed to reinforce teaching points or enable pupils to reflect upon, or consider how to refine their work or that of their peers. These opportunities, as well as teachers' feedback in lessons, help pupils to understand how well they are doing.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation stage is good because regular assessment by adults ensures that activities are tailored to meet children's needs and interests. In the main school, assessment of pupils' work is developing but this information is not always used well enough by teachers to match learning to pupils' different starting points; meaning not all are stretched to achieve their very best.
- Some, but not all teachers, make sure that pupils use their sketchbooks regularly to help them develop their ideas and experiment.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- The curriculum is developing well because of the recent, successful integration of all aspects of the subject into an interesting range of topics.
- First-hand experiences, 'Wow weeks' where all pupils work with the specialist art teacher, the many visits out of school, art club and homework opportunities enrich the curriculum well.
- Pupils have many opportunities to learn about famous artists through half-termly 'art history days'. They are quite accomplished in commenting on the qualities of artists they study and research. However, they have fewer opportunities to study or work with contemporary artists and craftworkers.
- Bright murals adorn corridors and cloakrooms. They raise the profile of the subject and provide an added stimulus to pupils' creativity and interest. The school's art gallery provides a great space to celebrate pupils' achievements.

- The use of digital media is developing effectively and pupils report positively on the range of packages they use. They particularly like opportunities to work in animation.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

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

- The subject has been placed at the centre of the topic-based curriculum in order to excite children's interest in the arts and in their learning.
- The coordinator, fully supported by the leadership team, is rightly developing the subject further through partnership working with a local primary school noted for its outstanding art, craft and design work and a local specialist secondary school.
- As a specialist art teacher, she works successfully with other staff, particularly inexperienced staff; coaching them and sharing ideas. She has an accurate view of the strengths and areas for improvement through regular monitoring of planning, pupil interviews and work scrutiny.
- A succinct improvement plan is focused on weaker areas and there is evidence of positive impact being made, such as in improvements in teachers' planning and the curriculum. There is still some way to go to ensure consistently good use of assessment across the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- hastening pupils' achievements in the subject in Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
 - ensuring that assessment information about pupils' achievements is used to tailor activities in order to challenge all pupils to achieve their best
 - addressing inconsistencies in the use of sketchbooks
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to work with, and learn from, contemporary artists and craft workers.

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