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Mrs K Gee
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Gee

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 15 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 parts of five lessons, including joint observations with the subject leader, you and the deputy headteacher.

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 widely varied attainment on entry for different year groups, children make good progress in the visual aspects of their creative development during the Reception Year. Boys and girls enjoy learning and establish strong foundations for the future. They make good progress in learning to respond to experiences and to work independently.
- Good progress continues among older pupils with attainment varying in different year groups by Year 6 because of their differing starting points. They make good progress in learning how to handle materials and processes, with a good emphasis on exploring the possibilities offered by different approaches to drawing.

- Pupils' outstanding attitudes to learning contribute strongly to their progress. They approach lessons with enthusiasm, share equipment very well, are helpful in organising resources and are mature when taking part in discussions. They think carefully about how to move their work forward.
- Pupils value opportunities to learn about other creative practitioners' work. They make good use of what they find out to support their own activities, especially when experiencing others' work at first hand.
- Pupils make good progress in learning to use visual elements, such as line and colour, to record what they see and to communicate mood and emotion. Their skills in drawing from direct observation develop securely and give them confidence when drawing from imagination and designing.
- While progress in lessons is regularly good, occasionally tasks are not tailored precisely enough to fully meet pupils' differing needs, especially of the more able pupils, and to ensure that all make outstanding progress.

Quality of teaching in art, craft and design

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

- Teachers work very hard to prepare lessons, taking care to research practical processes and background information about artists whose work will be referred to. They make good use of other adults' expertise, such as teaching assistants leading demonstrations when they have relevant skills.
- Lessons are planned well by teachers around clear learning objectives. They include good opportunities for discussion through which pupils understand well what they are doing and make good progress in fostering their speaking and listening skills. Teachers monitor progress well during lessons, often giving insightful guidance through individual discussions. Teaching assistants are well deployed, particularly to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Classroom management is skilful. Teachers and other adults work well together to organise equipment, materials and activities so that learning environments are productive. Their relationships with pupils are very good and involve sensitive reinforcement of appropriate behaviour.
- Systems for monitoring pupils' progress over time are good. The information is often used well to adapt activities to meet their differing needs. However, this is not always the case and on occasion opportunities are missed to finely tune tasks, especially to challenge more able pupils.
- Effective use of sketchbooks in some classes enables pupils to gather resources and develop ideas. In other classes, sketchbooks are not contributing as much as they could to learning and pupils are not clear enough about how to use them.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- The curriculum is enjoyed by boys and girls of all ages. It involves well-considered themes adapted effectively, for example, to appeal to boys whose progress had been slower. Pupils welcome the links to learning in other subjects, saying these help make their learning purposeful, for example, finding out about other countries through their artwork.
- Pupils are offered a good range of experiences of both two- and three-dimensional work on a variety of scales. They have good opportunities to work on group projects so as to develop team-working skills, such as large-scale pieces based on the work of Gustav Klimt.
- Progression through different processes, for instance exploring different types of paint or mixed media, is well planned so that pupils' learning builds well over time and does not duplicate experiences.
- Some good additional activities are planned to help pupils to extend their learning, for example in after-school clubs. These include opportunities for more able pupils to develop their work further but are not systematically organised to ensure that they reach their full potential over time.
- Effective use is made of external stimulus to support learning. Visits to places of interest, including galleries and museums, link well with themes studied. Good reference in pupils' work to the local environment and the area that they live in is typified in Year 6 paintings of a local river.
- Pupils enjoy and benefit from direct experience of artists' work during their visits out. They have had some opportunities to experience artists at work during residencies in school. However, the school knows these are not regular enough to ensure that all pupils witness and learn from creative processes at first hand and is planning to enhance such experiences.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

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

- The subject leader is passionate about the subject and makes a good impact as reflected in the refined curriculum, the development of teaching and the high profile of the subject in the school.
- She is strongly motivated in developing her own skills and those of her colleagues, and looks outside the school to remain abreast of innovations. For example, she attends local authority courses and other professional development, using the outcomes outstandingly well to improve the skills of other staff in training sessions and team teaching.
- Subject monitoring is based on a good range of work and planning scrutiny, lesson observation and discussion with pupils by the subject leader. This gives her a good understanding of strengths in provision and outcomes for pupils and what needs to be improved.
- Subject development priorities are well focused, including good reference to whole-school priorities. While overall goals are challenging, the expected impact of individual initiatives is not always precise enough to check easily that they are working, for example in improving outcomes for specific groups of pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the impact of teaching further by ensuring that activities in lessons always meet pupils' differing needs and sketchbooks are consistently used
- enriching the curriculum by including more regular opportunities for pupils to experience artists at work and activities to stretch more able pupils
- furthering the effectiveness of subject leadership by ensuring that actions intended to bring improvement always have focused and measurable goals so their impact can be checked precisely and the next steps planned.

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

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector