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Mrs H Forrest
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Forrest

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 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: discussions with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of one full lesson as well as a learning walk to observe all other classes in the school.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

Achievement in art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- Achievement over time is satisfactory. Pupils progress at varying speeds because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. As a result, by the end of Key Stage 2, although their progress is satisfactory, some pupils are capable of reaching higher standards.
- From their starting points, children in Reception make good progress in developing creativity. They manipulate tools and materials confidently, working on a range of scales. By the end of Reception, the large majority of children are working securely within the early learning goals for creative development.
- Pupils' confidence in investigating and making in art, craft and design continues to develop satisfactorily in Key Stage 1. Even so, the tendency

for too much adult intervention while they work limits opportunities for pupils to explore and pursue their ideas freely.

- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have experienced a range of materials and processes and outcomes are of satisfactory quality. Pupils talk about and share their ideas regarding the work of artists, techniques and processes enthusiastically using an adequate range of visual language. They are less proficient at discussing ways of modifying and improving their work.
- With the exception of the Reception class, drawing is a relative weakness. Drawing skills are not taught routinely and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise and refine these skills.
- In some classes, pupils use their sketchbooks imaginatively to record their own ideas and thoughts using a broad range of techniques but in others they are used rarely, if at all.
- Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) competently to explore design and make artistic film animations.
- In all classes, pupils work with enjoyment, commitment and perseverance. Relationships are good. They share equipment respectfully and diligent risk assessments, coupled with good classroom organisation and management, ensure that they work safely.

Quality of teaching in art, craft and design

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

- Teaching is variable, ranging from satisfactory to good. The recent introduction of a standard planning format and skills progression information is addressing weaker teaching. Prompted by references on planning sheets, all teachers are beginning to take into account National Curriculum levels, subject coverage requirements and skills progression. Even so, the previous lack of frequency in formal assessment hinders teachers in planning work based on what pupils have learnt beforehand and the standards they have achieved.
- Pupils' progress fluctuates year on year depending on individual teachers' confidence in teaching the subject and their subject knowledge. This has been rightly identified by the school and a strategic plan, designed to provide further training and guidance to achieve consistency, is securely in place.
- Lessons are organised well so that pupils can work productively. Teachers provide sufficient examples of artists' work and artefacts to provoke thought and inspire. Most pupils are able to demonstrate techniques confidently.
- Teachers use ICT effectively and creatively to share learning objectives, highlight relevant teaching points and review learning.
- In some classes, pupils' work, well-chosen images and artefacts contribute to good-quality displays that stimulate curiosity and enable learners to reflect on how their ideas are developing.

- Some lessons are front-loaded with lengthy explanation and instruction so that an appropriate balance between pertinent teaching points and practical activity is lost. Even so, pupils listen attentively and respond positively.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children have rich learning experiences to promote their creativity. Provision is tempting with plentiful opportunities for make-believe play and investigation of tools and materials to fire the imagination. Children's progress is monitored diligently and this information is used to adapt and refine provision so that it supports progression. This good practice continues into Year 1 but steadily disappears as pupils move through the school. By the end of Key Stage 2, objective-led planning dominates with too few chances for pupils to experiment and explore.
- Pupils have good access to an appropriate range of technology and software to support their work in the subject which boys and girls respond to and use enthusiastically.
- Care is taken to adapt materials and tools appropriately for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they can participate fully and safely.
- The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to revisit skills and techniques that they have experienced previously as well as being introduced to new ones over time. Even so, not all teachers are using the curriculum guidance sufficiently. For example, careful monitoring has identified that printmaking and 3-D are not taught regularly enough and steps have been taken to rectify this.
- Art Week is a biannual feature that is much enjoyed by pupils and staff. Visiting artists contribute and pupils study the work of specific artists in depth. This culminates in displays of pupils' work to cross-fertilise ideas, which are used by the subject leader to assess standards.
- The school strongly encourages gifted and talented pupils to take up opportunities to attend art club (run by a teacher with a specialism in art and design) and attend workshops and activities at the local gallery. Pupils who have attended say how much they enjoy them.
- Links with other local schools, creative partnerships and experts are generally underdeveloped so that opportunities are missed for further enrichment, extension work and specialist input.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

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

- Accurate self-evaluation provides a precise picture of strengths and weaknesses. You and the subject leader demonstrate refreshing honesty in your analysis and in your resolve to raise the subject's profile.
- A well-considered, three-year strategic plan is promoting improvement, for example in achieving more consistency in curriculum planning. However, its impact is not yet evident in raising standards.
- Staff with specialist expertise and a passion for art and design are utilised effectively; they contribute to the subject's development, for example in working with gifted and talented pupils and in supporting other staff.
- Weaknesses in staff's knowledge and understanding are being addressed appropriately through training and professional development opportunities.
- Monitoring activities inform future plans. However, the subject leader has insufficient opportunities to observe teaching at first hand so that training can be tailored to need and development points designed to raise its quality.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that pupils make consistently good progress from their starting points in Year 1 by:
 - developing a robust system for regular assessment against National Curriculum levels
 - providing the subject leader with opportunities to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning at first hand
 - providing pupils with regular opportunities to draw from memory, observation and imagination and to teach new drawing skills systematically
 - developing a consistent approach to pupils' use of sketchbooks
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to experiment and apply their experiences of materials and processes including drawing.

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

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector