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Mrs D Hughes
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hughes

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 10 October 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 you as subject coordinator and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of four lessons, including one 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 well below average starting points in the Nursery, children make good progress in their creative development. Their attainment is still below that expected by the start of Year 1.
- Pupils make good progress from class to class and by the end of Year 6 their attainment is average and occasionally above. The gap between the achievement of boys and girls is narrowing because more interesting topics that have been planned are effective in exciting and engaging boys.
- Pupils develop good skills and understanding about different visual elements such as tone and colour. For example, Year 6 pupils were seen choosing from a variety of media to blend colours to portray figures in

motion. In a Key Stage 1 class, pupils achieved well in their collaborative work, depicting contrasting moods in the style of Picasso's blue and rose periods.

- Pupils use sketchbooks from Year 1. However, the practice of using a new sketchbook each year limits their ability to review their progress overtime, refer to past achievements or use them to influence future ideas.

Quality of teaching in art, craft and design

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

- Teachers are confident, keen and knowledgeable about the subject. They share their enthusiasm effectively so that pupils are thoroughly engrossed throughout their lessons.
- Good relationships between adults and pupils help pupils to gain the confidence to put their own ideas forward, make independent choices as they explore materials and develop their skills.
- Teaching assistants are well-deployed and target their support on pupils who may be struggling, giving them guidance and developing their confidence to move on with increasing independence.
- Leaders have improved the way in which teachers assess pupils work. This has helped them plan a variety of activities that meet the pupils' differing needs. Occasionally, assessment information is not used well enough to challenge pupils, particularly more able boys and girls.
- The school, working with a local Creative Partnership, developed a creativity wheel which supports pupils' evaluation of their work. Together with other improved assessment procedures, this contributes to pupils' confidence in evaluating the qualities of their own work and how to improve things further.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- The curriculum enables pupils to work on a wide range of scales in both two- and three-dimensional media. Pupils' drawing development has been a key focus recently leading to good progression of skills as pupils move through the school.
- Enrichment of the subject is good and staff make the most of the location of the school. For example, the local beach is used for sand sculptures and observing and sketching the large artworks that adorn the sea front.
- The school ensures that the many visits out of school that launch the termly topic, includes an art, craft and design focus. The subject is used effectively to stimulate pupils' interest and develop a 'wow' factor.
- Visiting artists and parents who are also artists enrich the curriculum effectively, providing pupils with good role models as well as enabling them to experiment in a wider range of materials. Pupils particularly enjoy 'creativity weeks' and appreciate opportunities to work with costume

artists who help them design their costumes for the annual Seaham Carnival.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

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

- The recently appointed subject leader is following in the footsteps of other successful colleagues who ensured that the subject remains highly visible in all aspects of school life. She has quickly and enthusiastically stepped into the role.
- The subject leader has a very accurate view of the strengths and areas for further improvement through rigorous self-evaluation. This is based on regular evaluation of pupils' progress by monitoring their work, analysing their sketchbooks, reviewing teachers' planning and more recently using first-hand evidence gained through lesson observations.
- Self-evaluation also takes account of the school's creativity self-evaluation form, which evaluates the impact of all creative subjects including art, craft and design. Outcomes from these activities inform an annual subject improvement plan that links well into the school's development plan. These are also monitored regularly for impact.
- Resources are well managed. The addition of an art room has given the subject an importance within the curriculum that pupils recognise. Vibrant displays celebrate pupils' achievements and their work with visiting artists.
- Partnership with a local special school that has an arts specialism is used well to develop pupils' animation skills. The school is developing stronger links with the local secondary school to widen pupils' opportunities further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- promoting pupils' skills in reviewing their progress, refining previous ideas and building on their achievements by encouraging them to work in their sketchbooks continuously as they move through the school
- addressing any remaining inconsistencies in teachers' use of assessment information to ensure that pupils are equally well challenged.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop art, craft and design in the school.

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow
Her Majesty's Inspector