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16 November 2011

Miss C Robson  
Headteacher  
Our Lady of the Rosary Roman Catholic  
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Westway  
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County Durham  
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Dear Miss Robson

### **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 November 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 four lesson observations that we jointly observed.

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

### **Achievement in art, craft and design**

Achievement in art, craft and design is satisfactory; with strengths in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- Children's creative development thrives in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are able to handle, explore and experiment with a wide range of materials through activities that develop their skills, and build their confidence, self-esteem and perseverance. For example, children took great care when modelling clay to make their 'Divali lanterns' and when making large-scale collages with beans and sand on high quality canvases.
- Their good start means that from often low starting points on entry into Nursery, most children are working securely; reaching the early learning goals for creative development by the time they start Year 1.

- Average attainment by the time pupils leave the school indicates satisfactory progress overall. However, their progress has accelerated due to improvements in teaching and the use of assessment. It is too early to evaluate the full the impact on standards by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' behaviour is good, not least because of the positive relationships developed between teachers and between pupils. They work keenly and say they really enjoy developing their own ideas. For example, when creating distorted images for their work in the style of Salvador Dali.

### **Quality of teaching in art, craft and design**

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

- Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject. They plan lessons carefully, ensuring that activities meet pupils' needs and interests. Improvements in planning show that teaching now builds effectively on pupils' previous achievements to help them progress from their varied starting points.
- Alongside the regular formal assessment of pupils work, teachers' oral guidance and well-targeted individual support in lessons ensures that boys and girls of different ability participate fully in activities and currently progress equally well.
- Pupils speak confidently about their work, identifying their strengths and improvements to tackle, because teachers take time to check pupils' progress, welcome their views and challenge their understanding. Opportunities for pupils to evaluate each others' work are managed well.
- Teachers enable pupils to use sketch books from Year 1. The recent addition of written feedback and assessment information is helping them to better-understand how well they are doing and how to improve further.

### **Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design**

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

- Pupils work with a satisfactory range of two-dimensional media. They are given regular opportunities to draw from observation, memory and imagination. There are limited opportunities for pupils to experiment with three-dimensional media.
- Cross-curricular themes, aimed particularly at stimulating boys' learning and enjoyment are making a positive difference to their achievements in the subject and to their enthusiasm in lessons.
- Strong links with a local special school that has a specialism in the arts is helping Key Stage 1 pupils to develop good animation skills. The previous project with Key Stage 2 pupils resulted in their achievements being showcased publicly at the Gala Theatre in Durham city.
- The school makes some use of its location and this is reflected in pupils' work. For example the work of Victor Pasmore provides a great stimulus as his renowned 'Apollo Pavilion' is virtually next door.

- Pupils benefit from opportunities to work with a few local artists and visits to the National Glass Centre and Laing Art Gallery. Leaders are aware of the need to develop further links with artists and craftworkers and make fuller use of the local area to strengthen the curriculum further.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management of art, craft and design**

The effectiveness of leadership and management of art, craft and design is satisfactory; the impact on improving teaching is good.

- The coordinator has a passion for the subject, is well qualified, leads by example and is determined to make sure the subject develops well. Her regular audits of practice provide a clear understanding of subject strengths and what could improve. This process now includes lesson observations and tracking teachers' assessments of pupils work.
- Action planning is well focused and is supported by appropriate strategies to drive improvement. For example, guidance provided recently has helped teachers plan lessons that have hastened pupils' progress.
- The coordinator strives to develop her skills and keep abreast of initiatives in the subject through professional development opportunities and liaison with other art-specialists.
- Opportunities to share good practice have been developed with the local cluster of catholic schools and the well-established partnership with the church. Pupils in the St Vincent De Paul after-school-group value the opportunities they have to create cards of condolence that they share in the community in times of sorrow.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- sustaining pupils' improved progress throughout their time at the school
- increasing opportunities for pupils to work in three dimensional media
- extending work with artists, craftmakers and designers in the locality.

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

**Margret Farrow**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**