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Mrs J Richards
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Richards

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 7 February 2012 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 four lessons and a lunchtime club.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

Achievement in art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- From low starting points children make satisfactory progress in developing their creativity in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Boys and girls work carefully but cautiously when exploring unfamiliar materials, tools and techniques. The limited scale and diversity of work reflects their limited confidence. However, pupils cooperate well and sustain interest.
- Through Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils progress satisfactorily. Standards remain below average because their ability to revisit and refine their work is underdeveloped. However, pupils enjoy their art, craft and design activities. During the visit, a particularly enthusiastic group enjoyed a lunchtime workshop provided by a Year 5 pupil skilled in Origami.

- A strength of pupils' learning is their understanding of line and colour to convey different moods and feelings. This was evident in Year 2 and Year 5 lessons observed, building on work seen in portfolios. For example, in Reception, children's colour matching and mixing related to the work of famous artists established a secure foundation for further progression.
- As pupils progress through school from widely varying starting points their ability to handle large scale or explore three-dimensional media and concepts, remain common weaknesses. Their use of sketchbooks to experiment with ideas or techniques, or store and review images of two- and three-dimensional work, is underdeveloped.

Quality of teaching in art, craft and design

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

- Teachers make effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) to capture pupils' interest. Juxtaposing images of contrasting work by different artists, observed in Key Stages 1 and 2, promotes the development of pupils' critical skills well. Visualisers, used by teaching and support staff, help pupils learn from demonstrations.
- Lessons are planned thoroughly. A particular strength of teachers' preparation is the thought given to questioning. However, teacher talk sometimes occupies too much of the lesson, particularly when unsupported by practical activities for pupils, for example making sketches or notes to draw on ideas or information given, independently.
- Assessment in the subject is used appropriately to identify and support pupils at different stages in their development. However, when translated into levels of attainment, assessments are too high in relation to standards nationally. As a consequence, expectations are not always appropriate. For example, templates are sometimes used at the expense of challenge.
- Staff apply their expertise in other subjects successfully, to their teaching of art, craft and design. For example, the leadership team observed teaching during the visit connected well their knowledge and passion for music and religious education to pupils' learning in the subject.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- The subject curriculum is evolving within a context of whole-school curriculum review and development. Successful enrichment projects build on, for example the 'International Week' parade. There are also topics that provide suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about and apply visual concepts, for example pattern in relation to the Aztecs.
- Planning for progression is in the early stages of implementation. As a consequence, while the curriculum enables pupils to enjoy a breadth of experiences the depth of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skill development in the subject is not yet fully realised.

- Provision for more able pupils in the subject is strengthened through collaborative work with local schools that include opportunities to work with practising artists. The special educational needs coordinator is monitoring pupils' progress across their different subjects, including art, craft and design, to help all pupils access learning equally.
- Successful use of external stimuli includes work with the Sorrell Foundation, linked to the development of the school environment. However, the impact of visits to art galleries and other places of interest is limited. The lack of sketchbook culture to record observations and experiences across the curriculum is a contributory factor.

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 leadership team' is well placed to implement, monitor and evaluate provision across their areas of senior responsibility. The subject improvement plan, identifying raising standards to the levels pupils attain in literacy and mathematics, acknowledges the need to provide a better balance with the existing focus on enjoyment as a measure of success.
- Support staff are directly involved in the leadership and management of the subject. Their confidence in supporting learning contributes to pupils' enjoyment, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, their impact on helping to raise standards is lessened by lack of exemplification, for example through a school portfolio.
- Celebration of pupils' work throughout the school and through support for external events such as County exhibitions contributes to the profile of the subject. However, critical evaluation of pupils' work, moderated with other schools, particularly as they progress from Year 6 to 7, is underdeveloped. Subject links with a nearby secondary school are, however, planned.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising standards in the subject by:
 - implementing, monitoring and evaluating plans for progression
 - enabling pupils to use sketchbooks well across the curriculum
 - teaching pupils how to review, modify and refine their skills
 - encouraging all teachers to apply their strengths to the subject
 - showing pupils aspirational work through visits or visitors
 - moderating assessments of pupils' work with other schools.

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

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector