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Mrs L Kearney
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Kearney

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 26 and 27 March 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: discussions with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of three lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2 and a session of free-flow activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage involving four classes.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

Achievement in art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- Reception-aged children make good progress from starting points that are well below those usually expected. They respond to a variety of sensory experiences communicating their ideas, thoughts and feelings confidently with a good level of independence. Outcomes for creative development are close to average at the end of the Reception Year.
- Between Years 1 and 6, most pupils make consistently satisfactory progress so their attainment is at the expected level when they leave. Very few achieve above average levels because pupils do not receive enough guidance about how to deepen, develop and apply their existing skills, knowledge and understanding, especially in drawing.

- Pupils' ability to use formal visual language to communicate their ideas is variable. Their repertoire of subject vocabulary improves as they move through the school. They make satisfactory progress in building their skills in using materials and processes.
- Pupils work with enjoyment, commitment and perseverance. Relationships, behaviour and safety are good. The subject promotes pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They work extremely well in groups sharing equipment, tools and ideas generously.

Quality of teaching in art, craft and design

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

- Teaching is satisfactory but variable depending on the depth of teachers' subject knowledge. Where this is stronger, teaching reflects an ability to individualise subject advice and guidance drawing upon well-chosen resources to support learning. Teaching promotes the development of subject-specific language and a repertoire of technical terms; however, occasional errors are evident indicating gaps in some teachers' subject knowledge.
- Staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage are adept at stepping back and allowing the children to take the lead in the pursuit of their ideas. They model creativity and are quick to respond to requests for additional resources so that the creative process is uninterrupted.
- Lessons are organised well so that pupils can work productively. Resources and sources of inspiration are imaginative and capture pupils' imagination. In a mixed-age class in Key Stage 2, design boards with picture and text references jogged pupils' memory of prior learning and provided sources of inspiration to trigger ideas. The use of sketchbooks to develop pupils' repertoire of ideas and techniques is inconsistent.
- Teachers observe and assess how well pupils are progressing during lessons routinely. However, assessment information is not always used to vary the starting points for learners. Not all teachers are secure in their understanding of progression.
- Additional adults assist, support, encourage and model judiciously so that pupils work as independently as possible.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- The curriculum meets requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum. Pupils are introduced to a satisfactory range of processes and all of the elements are covered. However, they do not revisit skills regularly enough to deepen their knowledge and understanding and refine their skills.
- In Reception, children benefit from an innovative approach to promote imagination and creative development. The zones, which children explore,

offer different and tempting creative experiences. Children are developing as creative, confident, happy individuals in this rich environment.

- Older pupils enjoy the themes they study which include an art, craft and design element. Links with other subjects are explicit, place learning in context and help pupils to understand the relevance of the subject.
- Visits to places of interest are regular and used as sources of inspiration. For example, a visit to Twycross Zoo stimulated a range of representational drawing and painting experiences.
- The study of artists, designers and craftworkers from different times, countries and cultures is adequately represented. Pupils have limited access to living artists or specialists to enhance their experiences.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

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

- Senior leaders demonstrate drive and ambition to raise standards of attainment in the subject. Subject leadership has been restructured thoughtfully with specialist experience in mind and arrangements for the handover of the subject to a new leader are secure.
- Art, craft and design has a marked presence and is valued in the school. A wealth of eye-catching, well-presented displays of pupils' work is evident around the building and in classrooms.
- Subject leaders, past and present, have a firm grasp of the effectiveness of provision and what needs to be done to raise standards of attainment. A new system for assessment is being piloted to monitor pupils' progress and to check that standards are rising year on year.
- Provision for monitoring and evaluation is factored into developing the subject leader's role. However, there is not enough opportunity for observation at first hand to identify where gaps in subject knowledge exist and where professional development should be targeted.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- accelerating pupils' progress so that the majority exceed age-related goals by:
 - ensuring that staff understand and recognise progression
 - embedding assessment systems to inform curriculum planning
 - achieving greater consistency in pupils' use of sketchbooks
- developing the subject leader's role in improving teaching and learning by:
 - observing teaching and learning at first hand across the school
 - developing resources and examples to exemplify progression
 - forging links with creative practitioners and other schools to enhance provision

- providing targeted training for staff to strengthen their subject knowledge.

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

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector