

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs C Rowbotham
Headteacher
Empingham CofE Primary School
School Lane
Empingham
Oakham
LE15 8PQ

Dear Mrs Rowbotham

Ofsted 2012–13 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 18 April 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 two lessons involving five different year groups.

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 satisfactory progress from broadly typical starting points on entry. By the end of the year, attainment is broadly average. The proportion of children working within the early learning goals is above the national figure but below that of other schools in the local authority. Very few children exceed the early learning goals.
- Steady progress continues through Key Stages 1 and 2. Finished pieces of art are competent and generally at the level expected.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils excel in their use of visual literacy where they are taught specifically how to study and interpret their own work and that of other artists. However, their ability to express it in their own work is not as skilled.

- Pupils' use of sketchbooks and the quality seen within them are variable. Nonetheless, their drawing develops satisfactorily using a fairly narrow range of techniques.
- Over time, pupils develop an adequate understanding of the work of artists, designers and craftworkers from different times, cultures and places. Key Stage 2 pupils study a broader range. For example, during the inspection they particularly enjoyed exploring the work of contemporary artists such as Dominic Wheadon and Pins. Their responses to these artists' work were profound, meaningful and demonstrated their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the subject.

Quality of teaching in art, craft and design

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

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent leading to average rather than above average standards of attainment over time. It is stronger in Key Stage 2.
- Provision in Reception and Year 1 is adequate but is controlled too tightly by adults so that opportunity for free experimentation, exploration and discovery is limited. By contrast, in Key Stage 2, pupils are motivated by lively and inspiring teaching where a good range of approaches keeps learning fresh.
- A suitable balance of learning through listening and creating is not achieved effectively in Reception and Year 1. However, older pupils benefit from the teacher's expert questioning targeting specific pupils and at the right level, especially for the most able, to challenge their thinking and to sustain their engagement.
- The accuracy of planned activities to meet the needs and abilities of all pupils in some mixed-age classes is too variable. Some hit the spot perfectly and others miss by a very wide margin where tasks are too challenging for the stage some pupils have reached.
- Teaching is confident and assessment is rigorous across the school. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships are excellent.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- In Reception and Year 1, children choose from a satisfactory range of activities to promote their creative development. Pupils experience a suitable range of materials, tools and media so that their skills develop satisfactorily. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum does not always provide a suitable balance of adult-directed and child-initiated play to promote creativity. Opportunities for pupils to extend their creative experiences outdoors are limited.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and enriched by visits, visitors and participation in community arts events. Links with other subjects are well developed.

- A topic cycle ensures that the National Curriculum is covered within fresh themes for pupils in mixed-age classes. Pupils' views are sought and curriculum planning is adapted to accommodate their interests such as the current Olympics theme. The planned route for the Olympic flame, close to the school, is capturing the imagination of learners of all ages and providing inspiration for a wide range of art, craft and design work.
- Skills and knowledge are taught systematically and pupils use a suitable range of materials and processes including information and communication technology.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

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

- The school uses expertise within its federation with another primary school effectively, especially to monitor and evaluate the subject's effectiveness.
- Systems are efficient for monitoring curriculum planning to ensure adequate coverage and quality assurance activities are carried out diligently.
- The assessment system has been developed effectively to establish individual pupil's attainment and to monitor their progress. Even so, the information is not always used well enough to pitch teaching at the right level for all abilities within a class.
- The school values creativity and aesthetics matter, as seen in the tasteful displays of pupils' work. However, priorities identified for improvement tend to be generic and not distinctive enough in relation to the needs and character of the subject.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving provision for creative development in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to invent, explore and make art independently
 - ensuring that activities are adapted to suit the stage of development that pupils have reached so that they have the necessary skills to be successful independently
- raising attainment in drawing by providing clear and consistent expectations for pupils' work in sketchbooks and extending the range of drawing techniques that they use.

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