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Ms E Curran
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Curran

Ofsted 2012–13 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 17 May 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 five lessons.

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 a low base of skills, children's creative development is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Most reach the expected level by the end of the Reception Year and enjoy using creative activities to respond to the world around them.
- Progress between Years 1 and 6 is satisfactory and pupils' attainment is average when they leave. Boys and girls make equal progress, as do pupils with special educational needs and from the different ethnic groups which comprise the school population.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress in learning to control a range of tools such as paint brushes, and in exploring processes like drawing and collage. They enjoy learning about work by other creative practitioners and apply what they learn appropriately to support their own learning.

- Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and work hard in lessons. They think carefully about how to develop their ideas but do not always have a clear enough understanding of what they are trying to achieve so as to make independent decisions about how to move their work forward.

Quality of teaching in art, craft and design

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

- Early Years Foundation Stage staff plan creative activities well to build on good assessment of children's progress and provide challenging next steps for each of them. This is less evident in older years and pupils sometimes undertake work which is not tailored fully to their differing needs.
- Teachers manage classroom spaces, pupils' behaviour and equipment well. They use electronic whiteboards confidently to show images and stimulate the regular discussions which help improve pupils' speaking skills.
- Teachers give satisfactory introductions to practical techniques and the work of creative practitioners, although there is variability in the quality of these. On some occasions pupils gain a good understanding of what to do and how to do it effectively, so as to guide their decision-making. On other occasions this is not the case and the pace of their work is slower.
- Sketchbooks are used effectively to record work, provide a repository of ideas and techniques, and for useful marking from teachers.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- Children are provided with a good range of activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Indoor and outdoor spaces are used well, with effective display and logical organisation of materials to encourage children to get equipment out and put it away independently.
- The curriculum between Years 1 and 6 builds satisfactorily on pupils' earlier experiences, with a wide range of two-dimensional processes but more limited experience of working in three dimensions.
- Staff have reasonable awareness of the level of attainment pupils should demonstrate in the key skill of drawing as they get older. However, they are not clear enough about this across the full range of processes used by pupils to ensure that learning builds well over time.
- Pupils enjoy the themes covered. These link well with other subjects, with topical events such as the Olympics, and with the school's location but opportunities are missed to refer to the pupils' diverse ethnic heritages. Additional support through the subject for pupils with emotional and social difficulties makes a positive impact, for example in one-to-one sessions.
- Visits to galleries and places of interest are used effectively to support subject learning and pupils' knowledge of the world. Opportunities for some pupils to work with locally based artists offer useful enrichment of learning, although do not yet extend to all pupils.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

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

- The recently appointed subject leader has good subject knowledge and, working with the assistant headteacher, shows determination to move the subject forward.
- Joint planning with staff, together with work scrutiny and informal visits to classrooms, gives a satisfactory direction for subject development so that strategic plans focus on appropriate areas.
- Staff development makes a satisfactory impact on teachers' ability to deliver the subject but is not always of sufficient depth to enable them to teach with the confidence needed to secure good or better pupil progress.
- Good use is made of external sources of support such as local galleries, national collections and a local artists' collective.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the impact of lessons by ensuring that all teaching:
 - about techniques and the work of creative practitioners is of high quality so pupils know how to achieve good standards and think independently about improving their work
 - challenges pupils of varying ability to do their best
- broadening the curriculum by:
 - making more connections with pupils' ethnic heritages
 - including more opportunities for three-dimensional work
- increasing the impact of subject leadership by working more closely with staff on their subject knowledge and confidence in teaching.

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

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector