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Mrs D Pyatt
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Pyatt

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 15 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: analysis of pupils' work; review of documentation; discussions with staff and pupils; and observation of five lessons, including four lessons observed jointly with you.

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 painting.

- Children enter Reception class with broadly average creative skills. A wide range of experiences, both indoors and out, captures their interest and builds their confidence, creativity, and skills successfully; as seen in their detailed drawings and paintings of mini-beasts in the playhouse and on the outdoor easels. They enter Key Stage 1 having made good progress.
- Until recently, pupils' progress slowed during Key Stages 1 and 2, because their individual skills and abilities were not being built on systematically. Improvements in the way teachers plan and deliver the subject now enable pupils to make satisfactory progress and attain levels that are at least in line with expectations. A few attain highly.

- Pupils learn to manipulate an appropriate range of materials, media and tools. They are very experienced in using two-dimensional media; their painting and drawing skills develop well. However, opportunities to experiment using three-dimensional or digital media are more limited.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes in lessons are exemplary. They are articulate and confident. Boys and girls equally work enthusiastically with a sense of purpose and satisfaction. Year 6 pupils say they particularly enjoyed their collaborative work for Kensuke's Kingdom.

Quality of teaching in art, craft and design

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

- In every lesson, good relationships between pupils and adults are the norm. In Reception classes, this provides children with the confidence to communicate their own ideas and to make choices which they relish.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and develop their skills successfully through partnership with a local school with good practice in the subject, a local authority funded advanced-skills teacher, visiting artists and recent whole-school in-service training.
- Planning is detailed. Skills and techniques are carefully taught. However lessons are not always matched to pupils' starting points well enough to ensure that skills are always built upon. Sometimes, whole-class activities with similar expected end points restrict opportunities for pupils to develop individual responses to the stimuli provided.
- Teachers' ongoing, questioning and oral assessment in lessons helps pupils to consider how well they are doing. Formal assessment procedures are developing but are not fully in place across the school. Nevertheless pupils are adept at evaluating their own work and that of their peers, saying this helps them to be reflective and learn from each other.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- The curriculum has improved to embed topics that interest more pupils. The use of the natural environment to stimulate pupils' creativity is a strength. Visits to a rural therapeutic centre, field centre and activities in the school's vast gardens including Narnia, an exciting outdoor space, help pupils to explore ideas from imagination and observation successfully.
- The subject is enriched through reference to a satisfactory range of artists and opportunities for pupils and staff to work with and learn from creative practitioners. Pupils recall these experiences with great enthusiasm and would like even more. They say they would particularly value more visits to local galleries and more opportunities to research artists for themselves.
- Pupils with a special talent in the subject are encouraged to develop their work at home and at school successfully, through additional sessions each week.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

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

- Since your recent arrival, leadership of the subject has been energised by further development of the subject within the creative curriculum and by developing the role of the coordinator who has now been given time, opportunity and authority to lead the subject.
- The coordinator is keen to move the subject on further. Recent initiatives such as whole-school in-service training, learning from best practice, partnership working with experts in the field, alongside the established partnership with a local high school are making their mark on teachers' confidence in the subject and pupils' progress in lessons.
- You and the coordinator have an accurate view of what needs to improve and the coordinator is taking action on key weaknesses. For example, she has introduced an assessment system and is making sure that skills are now planned progressively within each topic.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing more opportunities for pupils to experiment and explore three-dimensional and digital media
- ensuring that lessons always take account of pupils' various starting points and enables them to develop individual responses to the lesson's theme
- widening pupils' first-hand experiences by:
 - extending the range of artists they research and study
 - increasing opportunities for work with creative practitioners
 - facilitating more visits to local galleries.

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

Margaret Farrow
Her Majesty's Inspector