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Mr P Cotter
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Cotter

Ofsted 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 16 November 2006 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 contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and chair of governors, discussions with a group of children from reception to Year 6, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of children's work and observation of three lessons.

Art, craft and design

The overall effectiveness of the subject was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- In the Foundation Stage pupils make good progress in their creative development and go on to achieve good standards in art, craft and design in Key Stage 1 and 2. Pupils with different abilities in their other subjects develop good drawing skills in all years. Displays also show that they are able to collaborate well on large scale projects to achieve lively, expressive work. Pupils have a satisfactory general knowledge of the art of different times and cultures. However, they show too little understanding about the work of individual artists, craft makers or designers.

- Pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject. They respond well in lessons and participate enthusiastically to extra-curricular opportunities. Questions are answered thoughtfully and care is taken when they handle different materials and artefacts. The children take pride in their work and respect the achievements of others; they would like to see the good class displays supplemented with individual examples of different work by individual children.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall.

- Most teachers are confident with the subject and plan interesting, well structured lessons often connected to other subjects. This is enriched with an outstanding programme of visits and visitors that makes learning coherent, stimulating and relevant for the children. Teaching assistants support particular children well and use questioning skilfully to check pupils' understanding.
- The short term assessment of work is good and teachers manage discussions about strengths and weaknesses of work achieved in lessons sensitively. However, the tracking of progress in and through the subject as the children move up the school is not systematic enough. Consequently although progress is good overall the inconsistencies that exist are not easily monitored.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is good overall.

- Curriculum provision contains both outstanding features and inadequacies. Children are given a wide range of opportunities to work in two-dimensions, three-dimensions and digital media. Nevertheless, curriculum depth is constrained by insufficient opportunities to re-visit and build skills, knowledge and understanding progressively. Objectives for individual lessons are sometimes insufficiently precise as a consequence.
- An age-appropriate range of themes is studied; boys and girls find these engaging. Links to the locality and school environment are good. Work related to the Catholic dimension of the school is effective. Imaginative connections between subjects are being developed. The school responds positively to unexpected opportunities to enrich the curriculum.

Leadership and management of art, craft and design

Leadership and management are good.

- The subject co-ordinator has an accurate understanding of strengths and future priorities for the subject which is shared by you and your governors. Nevertheless, evaluation makes too little direct reference to the diverse qualities of pupils' work in relation to the different strands of the National Curriculum.

- Good capacity to lead further improvement is evident. Planning for success in the school is about having high aspirations for achievement that are underpinned by the well-being of staff and children. The school is very well informed about innovations in education. The environment and ethos at Holy Cross remains distinctive.

Inclusion

The subject makes good provision for all pupils. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities have full access to the curriculum and make good progress. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong and unifying feature of the school that the subject makes a good contribution to.

Subject issue: breadth, depth and creativity of provision and outcomes

Pupils' enjoyment and achievement at the school is enriched by the subject. Creativity is clearly valued and the expression of pupils' own ideas, observations and feelings encouraged by staff. A broad range of opportunities is experienced; depth is currently limited by curriculum planning already identified. However, when pupils design for a purpose, for example the roof garden, they develop depth of understanding about the role of designers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to define clearly what is expected of teachers and pupils in relation to progression of subject skills, knowledge and understanding
- to use the full range of evidence in sketchbooks, portfolios and other subjects to track the progress made by individual pupils in meeting expectations.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop art, craft and design at the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector