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Ms J Parker
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Dear Ms Parker

Ofsted survey inspection programme – art, craft and design

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and children, during my visit with Kevin Sheldrick HMI on 17 October 2006.

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. Feedback letters are published on the Ofsted website every half-term.

The evidence used to inform judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, observation of lessons and an assembly featuring the subject.

Art, craft and design was judged to be satisfactory overall with good features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy creative activities, working carefully and thoughtfully. They are able to experiment with different materials and sustain interest beyond the task. Most children were able to work independently showing good understanding about organisation of materials and equipment.
- In Key Stage 1, children explore the characteristics of different materials creatively and use different media and methods to represent observations. However, for some children their ability to express their imagination through art, craft and design is constrained by limited

reflection on first hand experiences. The recent introduction of sketchbooks in Key Stage 1 has started to improve this.

- In Key Stage 2, children continue to progress well in their learning about different materials and techniques. Individual children are able to work with different degrees of control and creativity to good effect in two, three-dimensions and on a variety of scales. However, they show very limited knowledge and understanding about different artists, craft makers and designers. This restricts their use of the approaches used by others to revisit, combine or extend their own skills and ideas. The Year 3 work in response to Lowry shows how children's understanding of scale and proportion has progressed through connections between their own work and that of other artists.
- Children in all years enjoy the subject, cooperate well with each other and respond purposefully to the views of teachers, support staff and other children. Children are careful when using different materials and equipment and this promotes good control when exploring a wide range of media.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with good features.

- Strengths of teaching observed included very well organised lessons introduced with enthusiasm and a genuine sense of open-endedness. Teachers and support staff emphasise the value of learning through exploration and experimentation. Individual discoveries are shared effectively with the whole class and peer evaluations add to the ethos of learning from each other.
- Effective work on display shows that some teaching provides children with a clear sense of purpose without compromising creativity. Projects made with visiting artists also show this good characteristic of planning, for example the felt wall hanging and stained glass windows.
- During lessons children receive constructive feedback and guidance about their work and this helps individual children progress. Work on success criteria has also enabled some pupils visualise what they need to do to improve. However, a wider range of examples are required in order to help children consider different ways of developing the good and outstanding achievement that is encouraged.

Quality of Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory with good improvements evident through self-evaluation.

- The curriculum provides children with opportunities to draw on the rich diversity of the local community; children generally respond well to themes that focus on personal identity and experience.

- The recent review of the subject curriculum has resulted in a sound scheme of work tailored to the school. However, the staff questionnaire has accurately identified the need to strengthen content related to subject knowledge and understanding, and visual and tactile concepts.
- Links with a local secondary school have started to address curriculum continuity in the subject. Opportunities for children to work together across year groups within the school are also used effectively to develop skills and provide opportunities for children to sustain their interest during a period of unbroken time. When invited to pursue ideas at home many children respond with ingenuity and enthusiasm; several asked for more guidance about how they could follow-up or prepare for lessons in the subject on a regular basis.

Leadership and management

Subject leadership and management are satisfactory with good features.

- The combination of joint subject co-ordinators with a mix of good planning and organisational skills and your clear commitment to developing the creative potential of all children provides good and effective leadership and management. Annotated portfolios that represent different levels of achievement are at an early stage of development. However, self-evaluation is generally well-informed and continuous.
- Planning is regularly monitored and adapted; evaluation through classroom observation remains informal. The school recognise the need to link whole school and subject priorities more explicitly and sharpen prioritisation, informed by systematic monitoring and evaluation that is equally focussed. However, a good culture of work sharing is evident through display, assemblies, and computers.
- Consumable resources and equipment are efficiently organised and coherently managed throughout the school, for example through use of a 'creativity trolley'. This has a positive effect on children's independence and teachers' increasing open-endedness as children progress through the school. Images, artefacts, visits and visitors are used effectively when arranged although these are not yet strategically managed in relation to their specific contribution to learning objectives.

Subject issue

The subject makes a positive contribution to children's overall enjoyment and achievement at the school. Creativity is clearly nurtured and the importance of originality understood by staff. A broad range of opportunities are experienced; depth is currently restricted by curriculum weaknesses already identified.

Inclusion

Subject provision is inclusive. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities have full access to the curriculum and are supported effectively. Gifted and talented children are identified and challenging opportunities are provided for them. The subject is used effectively to develop awareness of cultural diversity.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to increase first hand experiences of original art, craft and design in order to develop the creative aspirations of children and their understanding about the contribution of the subject to the creative industries
- to extend the use of success criteria by relating them to different examples, to the strands of the national curriculum attainment target, and to long term planning for progression including thinking skills
- to develop depth of knowledge, understanding and skills by structuring opportunities for children to revisit experiences as they progress through school and by using the work of other artists, craft makers and designers to show how ideas and observations can be pursued.

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, published on the Ofsted website and made available to your next institutional inspection team.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector