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Miss L Atkins
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Dear Miss Atkins

Ofsted 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 23 January 2007 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, discussions with pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons.

Art, craft and design

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are outstanding.

- Standards of attainment are well above average in most respects and compare very well with those attained by pupils in similar schools. Pupils make good progress in most elements and exemplary progress in painting and drawing.

- In the Foundation Stage pupils achieve or exceed the Early Learning Goals in creative development. They are confident, happy individuals who freely and imaginatively explore the scope of materials through play to create original pieces of art and design work. Extensive opportunities for imaginative play contribute to the high level of enjoyment the pupils show in learning.
- Pupils gain knowledge and skills at a good rate throughout the school. Their appreciation and knowledge of the work of past and present artists, designers and craftspeople across the world is excellent.
- The pupils have excellent attitudes towards the subject. High quality teaching contributes to this as well as pupils' extensive involvement in collaborative work for exhibitions and projects that focus on creativity in learning.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are outstanding.

- Teaching is at least good in all respects and exemplary in some.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge that lends confidence to their teaching styles.
- Teachers plan for the next steps in learning very effectively. Information from assessments of pupils' work are used to ensure that all pupils are sufficiently challenged in lessons.
- Relationships are strong and pupils work harmoniously with sustained concentration.
- Evaluation of units of work and the achievement of pupils is regular and systematic. Pupils who excel as well as those who find the work too difficult are identified although the records do not specify why this is so sufficiently clearly.
- The quality of pupils' self assessment and evaluation of their own work and each others' both orally and in writing is exemplary.
- Teaching assistants are well directed to support learning.
- Pupils receive regular, helpful feedback on the quality of their work from staff and visitors. They know how to improve and develop their work.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding.

- Good links are made with other subjects especially literacy. For example, theme weeks incorporating music, dance, drama and art are thoroughly enjoyed by pupils and capture their interest and imagination.
- There is a high take up for art club that boys and girls look forward to and thoroughly enjoy.
- Good planning ensures that knowledge and skills are taught systematically.
- Pupils have access to high quality resources and a range of media. However, their sketchbooks are underused to build collections of techniques to refer to, to help them to understand the world through drawing or as a record of the personal journey they have taken over time.

- A close link with a school in Africa has broadened pupils' understanding of African arts and crafts and contributes to pupils' good cultural development.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to work with visiting artists, designers and craftspeople to learn from their talents and specialisms.
- Top quality exhibitions of pupils' art, craft and design work give the subject a high profile in the school and the local community. Pupils are rightly proud of their achievements.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- You and the subject leader have a strong commitment to and passion for the subject that is instantly recognised through the strong visual dimension that pervades the whole school.
- The monitoring role of the governor linked to the creative arts provides useful evaluative feedback to the leadership team through regular visits.
- The subject leader monitors the quality of teaching and learning and knows where strengths and weaknesses lie. Appropriate training is provided for staff in response to further develop teachers' subject knowledge and skills.
- Pupils' progress is tracked over time. Work is regularly moderated and levelled by all teachers. Parents are well informed about how well their child is doing through regular reports that are being developed to include images saved on a CD.
- Resources are well organised and wide ranging. The school has built its own art collection over time through pupils and teachers annual involvement in purchasing a print, artefact or piece of craftwork to enjoy in their own classroom.
- Strong links have been developed with the local university and secondary school to provide additional workshops and artists to work with the pupils.

Inclusion

The school is extremely inclusive. Displays celebrate the work of all children and reflect positive images of diversity. The school is a fair trade school, raising pupils' awareness of exploitation of artists and craftworkers. The creative aspect of the subject and the school's imaginative approaches to teaching and learning engages boys and girls equally well. There are many opportunities for pupils to study western and non-western art to develop their knowledge and understanding of different times, cultures and countries. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and make good progress. Gifted and talented pupils are recognised and extended.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to develop pupils' use of sketch books throughout the school.

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

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector