

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs Anne Wesley
Headteacher
Broom Barns Junior Mixed & Infant School
Homestead Moat
Stevenage
Hertfordshire
SG1 1UE

Dear Mrs Wesley

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 25 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 are published on the Ofsted website every half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interview with you and the subject co-ordinator, discussions with a group of children, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of children's work and observation of lessons in Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and 2.

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 develop their creativity cautiously but with interest and care. Boys and girls develop confidence in using a range of media in Key Stages 1 and 2. Achievement is good overall; understanding about the work of artists, craft makers or designers is satisfactory; observational skills and work in two dimensions are strengths. Sketchbook experimentation underpins some of the most effective work. For example colour mixing, matching and blending leads to confident and knowledgeable use of colour in all years.

- Pupils express enthusiasm for the subject in all years. They respond particularly well in lessons where resources stimulate their interest in looking closely and handling inquisitively. Very few of the pupils have visited an art gallery but they show sensitivity when reviewing the work of other pupils and respect the displays created in different classes and through 'art week'. Collaboration between pupils in and through the subject is good; they are proud of the 'friendship bench' designed by pupils.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall.

- Teachers plan, organise and teach the subject efficiently and effectively. Some teaching shows particular confidence in the subject through planning that uses published schemes of work as a starting point and shares personal knowledge about images and artefacts in an engaging way with the pupils. The best teaching checks pupils' understanding and uses the achievements of individuals to inspire all. Teaching assistants focus their support clearly and make a significant contribution to the quality of learning.
- The assessment of work is innovative; teachers have a clear picture of how well different pupils achieve in relation to units of work that focus on different skills, knowledge and understanding. The progress of gifted and talented pupils is tracked effectively. However, more opportunities could be given for pupils to learn about making considered choices themselves as a result of teachers' assessments. When given homework in the subject the quality and diversity of pupils' responses are impressive.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is good overall.

- Pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to work in two and three-dimensions. Records of displays that focus on the visual elements of art show that line, tone, colour and composition are particularly well structured and supported with examples of relevant artists' work. The school has developed the use of computers as a creative tool very effectively; this represents a significant improvement since the school was inspected in 2005. Nevertheless, curriculum depth is limited by too few structured opportunities to revisit skills, knowledge and understanding by applying them in mixed-media work.
- A good range of themes are studied; the natural environment is used as a resource and multicultural education through the subject is a good feature. There are also good examples of personal, social and health education linked to subject aims that include 'develop pupil capacity for self-expression' through art and design. The good quality of work achieved during 'art week' is evidence of pupils sustaining their interest and widening their awareness of a range of responses to a shared stimulus.

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 that is informed by the views of pupils, teachers and support staff. Formal lesson observation is not used to determine specific improvement priorities linked to teaching and learning. Nevertheless, monitoring and evaluation are informed by analyses of pupils' work, including sketchbook evidence of their working processes. Photographs are starting to contribute to the evidence of experiential learning in the subject.
- Good capacity to lead further improvement in and through the subject is evident. The subject co-ordinator and several other staff are well qualified in the subject, are passionate about the role of the subject in the school and its community context, and have used the subject effectively to stimulate wider improvements in pupils' literacy skills for example.

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. The very effective working relationships between teachers and support staff target the needs of individual pupils very effectively.

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

Pupils' enjoyment and achievement at the school is enriched by the subject. Creativity within the subject is clearly valued and the expression of pupils' own ideas, observations and feelings a distinctive aim. A broad range of opportunities are experienced; depth is limited by structured re-visitation. However, the 'art week' has proven the value of sustained activity.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to increase opportunities for pupils to revisit and refine their subject skills, knowledge and understanding by developing work in mixed-media and by responding to first hand experiences of artists, craft makers and designers
- to develop the aim to express individuality through the subject by increasing opportunities for pupils and teachers to make choices, experiment and apply their creativity across the curriculum.

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