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Dear Mrs O'Regan

Ofsted Subjects and 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 9 May 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 the subject co-ordinator and advanced skills teacher, discussions with groups of children, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of children's work in Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and 2 and observation of lessons, some jointly observed with the subject co-ordinator.

Art, craft and design

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall.

- From below average attainment on entry the pupils make satisfactory progress in their creative development in Foundation Stage. In Year 1 pupils make good progress, build skills and develop knowledge and understanding to achieve standards that are average for their age. Evidence in sketchbooks and portfolios indicates that progress is

inconsistent as they move through the school but a high proportion of pupils join the school at different stages which contributes to a wide range of starting points in all years. By Year 6 most pupils have achieved standards in line with similar schools nationally. The current Year 5 pupils are able to show evidence of consistently good achievement through their sketchbooks, discussion, displays and portfolios.

- Pupils particularly enjoy learning unfamiliar techniques especially those that enable them to explore 'accidental' effects and involve tactile experiences. They are less successful developing their drawing skills or revisiting and combining previous experiences to refine their work. Nevertheless, pupils appreciate the opportunity to see the work of other pupils on display and with the support of their teacher value different ideas expressed by other pupils. In discussion some pupils are reticent about expressing their own views and in some instances take too much time before listening carefully. However, pupils were observed working co-operatively in groups and responsibly when using different materials that required safe practice.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in the subject are satisfactory overall.

- Teachers' lesson planning is sound, based on the QCA scheme of work but in the best lessons adapted to the school. For example the 'objects and meanings' unit contains still life objects connected to worship which the pupils clearly understand have significance beyond their appearance. Their careful observation and sensitive drawings in this instance show what pupils are capable of when their feelings are expressed visually. Assessment is used well to review planning in order to meet the different needs of individual pupils. However, long term planning for progression across key stages is a weaker aspect of provision.
- The use of ICT as a teaching resource and a tool for learning is a strength of provision. Images are thoughtfully selected by teachers; these have a significant impact on pupils' interest, desire to get involved in discussion and their understanding of what is expected of them. In the best lessons ICT is complemented by demonstration that enables pupils to understand how images and artefacts might have been made. Work inspired by the artist Mondrian in Year 2 is an example of how pupils use ICT to enhance their learning; in Year 6 work inspired by Julian Opie shows effective use of resources at the City Learning Centre. These examples show that pupils are able to take their work further but pupils could sometimes do more to enhance the quality of their achievements by combining techniques or working into their work.

Quality of curriculum

The art, craft and design curriculum is satisfactory.

- Pupils are introduced to a satisfactory range of experiences. However, the school has planned to improve the curriculum by developing a new scheme of work, manage a forthcoming 'art week' and series of gallery visits. This accurately addresses the need to build on pupils' knowledge of different artists by providing more first hand experiences. Teachers do make reference to the locality but the curriculum could do more to promote pupils' awareness of the built and natural environment by linking projects to the continuous development of different drawing skills and use of sketchbooks. However, there is good use made of resources such as the environmental centre.

Leadership and management of art, craft and design

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The subject co-ordinator has a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses in the subject through a structured audit of staff needs, discussions with pupils and review of outcomes. This informs improvement planning; for example a workshop with an artist specialising in three-dimensional experience has been arranged in response to the staff audit of gaps in subject knowledge and skills. However, some inconsistencies remain despite good policies and guidance in areas such as assessment.
- Links with other schools and up-to date knowledge about different subject initiatives contribute to the critical edge of self-evaluation. This is effectively combined with the use of display to share and celebrate pupils' achievements. The best examples explicitly contribute to pupils' learning. For example a display about sculpture incorporated pupils' work alongside images and questions about the work of different sculptors, supported with books to provoke pupils' curiosity. Links between subjects are sometimes well developed; pupils compared and contrasted Greek pottery as part of a history topic with contemporary teapots analysed in art, craft and design. Staff and pupils remain uncertain about the distinction between art, craft and design and design and technology.

Inclusion

Subject documentation includes a clear policy for inclusion. Good regard is given to gender and ethnicity in curriculum planning. The different needs of individual pupils are identified through assessment and supported by the targeted work of support staff and gifted and talented programmes developed with the University of Greenwich.

Subject issue: The impact of assessment on pupils' progress and creativity

Pupils' progress across different strands of the National Curriculum attainment target is assessed systematically. A good feature is the use of assessment information by teachers to modify their teaching in order to address the

needs of different pupils. Feedback to pupils is positive but advice about how to improve is more variable, particularly through written comments and targets that some teachers do well. Class discussion about the work of individual pupils celebrates their creativity but pupils are not always clear about what creativity means or how to demonstrate it. Nevertheless, teachers generally give careful thought to making learning objectives clear to pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to develop drawing skills by widening the approaches to drawing, increasing the use of sketchbooks and opportunities for pupils to work large scale
- to promote progression by developing a curriculum that encourages pupils to revisit and refine their subject knowledge and skills
- to increase opportunities for pupils to observe the work of other artists, craft makers and designers through first hand experiences
- to build on the assessment scheme by relating it to pupils' records of achievement and in particular evidence of their progress and creativity.

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