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Mr Mark Trott
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Dear Mr Trott

Ofsted survey inspection programme – art, craft and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 24 September 2007 to look at work in art, craft and design.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the quality of assessment in the subject and its impact on pupils' progress. The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons or part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of art, craft and design was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- The pupils' attainment on entry is average and their progress is satisfactory. They work hard in lessons, sustaining their focus and learning to organise themselves well. They enjoy exploring the physical qualities of materials, developing good brush control for example when painting and responding especially well to mixed media work.

- The pupils are keen to learn about other artists and craftspeople; their analysis of the work of others is good, supporting their own work well.
- While the pupils develop satisfactory skills in evaluating their progress, they do not always understand clearly enough the criteria against which their evaluations are made. As a result, decisions about what to do next are sometimes arbitrary rather than purposeful. This hinders their capacity to fully exploit the visual language and develop diverse responses. The more able in particular do not go as far as they might.
- Pupils record their work carefully in sketchbooks but these are not sufficiently developed as resource banks of ideas.

Quality of teaching and learning in art, craft and design

Teaching and learning in art, craft and design are satisfactory.

- Lessons are well managed in the restricted space offered by some classrooms, and offer a good range of tasks. Teachers enjoy productive relationships with pupils and know them well.
- Resources are good, including a specialist room for practical work. Interactive whiteboards and displays are used effectively to show images and stimulate learning.
- Teachers work hard to prepare projects around the overall scheme of work but do not always adapt work sufficiently well to meet the needs of all pupils, especially the more able.
- Teachers' understanding of key aspects of subject knowledge varies considerably. As a result some lessons focus on completing each element of a project rather than on exploring its creative possibilities. The guidance given to pupils does not consistently clarify how to exploit the visual language in order to communicate ideas.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in art, craft and design is satisfactory with areas of strength.

- The pupils encounter a satisfactory range of materials and processes in a logical sequence, covering aspects of fine art, craft and design.
- The curriculum engenders a positive response from pupils, especially in relation to projects which offer an expressive dimension, such as where poetry or music is used as a starting point.
- The school is beginning to make good use of its environment as a source for work, for example a Year 3 project based on local buildings.
- A Year 6 summer term project with an artist in a local gallery represents a positive development in giving pupils more knowledge and understanding of contemporary arts practice. Nevertheless this area remains under-represented in pupils' knowledge.
- The school collaborates widely with other schools internationally. These opportunities are well linked to the art and design curriculum. Cross-curricular work is well developed overall, for example involving innovative study of portraits as part of a project on the Tudor dynasty.

Leadership and management of art, craft and design

The leadership and management of art, craft and design are satisfactory with growing strengths.

- The subject leader has been in post for a year and has developed a sound understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the subject.
- She has good subject knowledge and is taking appropriate steps to keep abreast of subject development beyond the school, to build local links and to support her colleagues.
- Subject development planning sets out appropriate areas for improvement and is based on good qualitative analysis of pupils' work, their responses in lessons and of teachers' planning. However, too little reference is made to assessment data to support this process, for example in identifying underachieving groups or less effective areas of the curriculum.

Subject issue: the quality of assessment and its impact on pupils' progress is judged to be satisfactory.

- Assessment is linked well within teaching and learning although its usefulness in moving the pupils forward is variable.
- Discussions in lessons between teachers and pupils and marking in sketchbooks, are useful but sometimes identify what needs to be finished rather than what needs to be improved and how.
- The pupils have good opportunities to assess their own work including at the end of projects although, again, they sometimes focus on whether work is complete rather than how effective it is.
- Monitoring pupils' progress over time involves satisfactory qualitative analysis but makes too little use of National Curriculum levels to lend rigour to the process. Teachers do not routinely make enough use of assessment information to adapt their planning to meet pupils' needs, for example for more able pupils.

Inclusion

Inclusion in the subject is satisfactory. Pupils make broadly even progress and the curriculum appeals equally, for example, to boys and girls. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well known and supported in lessons but more able pupils could achieve more.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increase pupils' knowledge of contemporary arts practice
- improve pupils' evaluation of their work in particular to develop its individuality further
- develop teachers' confidence in assessing and guiding improvements
- use assessment data more analytically to adapt projects, increase challenge and inform subject development planning.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, 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

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector