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Mrs L Austin  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Austin

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 25 September 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.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- In the Foundation Stage, pupils' skills in creative development on entry broadly meet expectations for four year olds. Creative activities are not designed well enough to allow for exploration and discovery. This constrains their development as creative individuals and their confidence in handling a range of materials and tools.
- Pupils' achievement through Key Stages 1 and 2 is good. As a result of effective and systematic teaching of skills, a good proportion of pupils reach above average standards particularly in painting and drawing.
- The work seen in sketchbooks shows that pupils make good progress in developing their drawing skills. However, sketchbooks are underused as a special place for pupils to explore and record their ideas or record the personal journeys they have taken from shared starting points.

- The pupils frequently make art that is personally meaningful to them, such as a beautifully crafted stained glass window in memory of a former pupil. Such opportunities are powerfully used by pupils to express their feelings through art and capture their awe and wonder.
- The pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the work of European artists, craftworkers and designers of different times in history. However their knowledge of art from different cultures and continents is restricted by the limitations of the curriculum.
- The pupils show a high level of enjoyment in the subject. When lessons allow for pupils to freely explore and experiment they work with sustained interest and their behaviour is good.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.

- The best teaching enables pupils to develop their ideas over time. The teacher's extensive subject knowledge enables pupils to work confidently and productively.
- The pupils have access to a range of media and tools and opportunities to make personal choices. Innovation is actively encouraged leading to diverse and original finished work.
- Lessons are structured and based on good planning and assessment with clear intentions for what pupils will learn.
- The expertise of the school's artist in residence is used effectively to promote and develop pupils' creativity in the subject. The impact of specialist teaching is seen clearly in the outstanding quality of the work achieved by pupils.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good overall.

- The needs and abilities of most learners are well served by the curriculum through systematic implementation of the school's well developed scheme of work for art and design. This ensures that pupils do not repeat units of work in mixed age classes.
- The curriculum in the Foundation Stage supports pupils adequately in developing and refining their skills in using tools and materials. However, opportunities for pupils to encounter experiences and resources to stimulate their curiosity and develop their ideas through imaginative play are too limited.
- The school flexibly uses allocated time for the subject to good purpose. For example, blocks of time are used appropriately for extended projects. Effective links with other subjects are also made.
- Community involvement through the subject is exceptionally strong. Parents and local residents regularly visit exhibitions of pupils' work at school and at local exhibition centres. Family Learning Week enables parents to accompany their children to participate in art and craft workshops of their choice in local schools.

- The curriculum introduces pupils to a good range of artists, craftworkers and designers but there are too few opportunities to learn about different cultures.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- The subject leader provides inspiration and clear direction about how the subject can be further developed, driven by her creativity, good subject knowledge and enthusiasm.
- The art and design policy is embedded in the whole school aims. The subject's high profile is evident in the interior of the building which is used as a gallery to exhibit good quality work produced by pupils. This is appreciated by pupils who say that it allows them to value each other's work.
- Very effective partnerships have been developed with a range of arts organisations as well as the local high school to support the school in providing a very wide range of good quality artistic experiences for its pupils.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is regular and the subject leader has a good understanding of standards reached by pupils in the subject. A well maintained portfolio of work provides guidance for staff in accurately levelling pupils' work.
- Teachers and teaching assistants receive regular training to broaden their experience and strengthen their skills.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning is regular but insufficiently rigorous to ensure that points for improvement given to teachers are worked at and improved.

## Subject issue

How creative are teaching, learning and outcomes in art, craft and design?

- This is variable across the school. Where teachers' subject knowledge and expertise is strong, outcomes show originality. This is because the pupils are given ample opportunity to fully explore the potential of materials and tools and make choices. When teachers have predetermined ideas of what the finished product will look like, creativity is more limited.
- Assessment takes place at regular intervals during the school year. Pupils are encouraged to make comment on their own and each others' work and have a good understanding of how well their skills are developing. Assessment outcomes enable the school to identify pupils who are particularly gifted and talented in the subject. They attend master classes at the local high school to extend their skills.

## Inclusion

- In lessons, the teachers plan for differing levels of ability and additional support especially for pupils with additional learning and physical needs, is provided by teaching assistants. This enables pupils to complete their work successfully and sustain their interest throughout the lesson.
- Although a largely mono-cultural school community, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds would find little in the curriculum to affirm their ethnicity. Imbalance in the study of western art and art from other continents and cultures limits pupils' knowledge, understanding and awareness of living in a wider multicultural context.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increase opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to explore and experiment with tools and materials especially in the Foundation Stage and to encounter the work of contrasting cultures
- widen the use and purpose of sketchbooks
- develop a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating teaching and its impact on learning.

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

Linda Killman  
Her Majesty's Inspector