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Mr J James  
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Dear Mr James

Ofsted survey inspection programme – art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 9 October 2007 to look at work in art 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 four lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. On entry, pupils' creative skills are at the expected level for their age. They make adequate progress over time to reach average standards of attainment by the time they leave the school.
- In the foundation stage, an extensive range of creative activities are on offer to promote pupils' creative development both in the classroom and outside in all weathers. These are sensitively led by adults who teach the pupils new skills, help them to make choices and encourage them to express their ideas imaginatively. Consequently, good proportions of pupils reach or exceed the early learning goals by the end of Reception.
- Pupils' achievement in Key Stages 1 and 2 is improving because skills are now being taught systematically. Where gaps are identified in

pupils' skills and knowledge, catch up classes are offered by the subject leader after school. These sessions are currently not fully inclusive, as some pupils are not able to stay after school hours.

- Standards in pupils' drawing and painting broadly match those in similar schools nationally. Teachers have greater confidence in teaching these processes because they have access to comprehensive guidance leading to improved subject knowledge. In contrast, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to experiment with different techniques and to work in 3D or on a large scale so these skills are underdeveloped.
- Across the age ranges, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, designers and craftworkers from different times, cultures and countries is variable. In some classes, examples of art are plentiful and pupils are very successfully learning how to look at art and identify similarities and differences in the work of artists.
- Sketchbooks are underused for pupils to explore and develop observation skills and to build a personal repertoire of techniques to use in future work.
- The contribution that the subject makes to pupils' satisfactory personal development is evident in their zest for learning in lessons.

### Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- Lessons are well-organised, objective-led and adequately resourced. The pupils fruitfully develop their ideas and skills over time as they progress through each planned unit of work. However, innovation is not encouraged enough to lead to diverse and original outcomes.
- The use of published planning material ensures that all strands of the national curriculum are taken into account and learning objectives are clear. Nevertheless, some lessons are not sufficiently well adapted to reflect the immediate locality and the individual interests of learners.
- Teachers use opportunities to develop pupils' art and design skills in the context of other subjects effectively.
- The pupils' behaviour is managed satisfactorily but when there is insufficient balance between listening, looking and doing some pupils become restless and lose interest.
- A teaching assistant, who is also an accomplished painter, regularly works with pupils. Using examples of her own art, she shares her sources of inspiration and provides pupils with a valuable insight into how an artist works.

### Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum enables teachers and learners to adequately meet the objectives of the foundation stage and the National Curriculum.
- In the foundation stage, pupils express and communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings through designing and making, dance, music and

imaginative play. They are introduced to an ever widening range of materials and tools to explore and master.

- The curriculum is sufficiently structured for pupils to build their subject skills over time but opportunities are few for them to make choices and use and apply existing skills in creative ways.
- Pupils use computer software and digital photography confidently in art and design activities from an early age.
- Celebration assemblies allow pupils to share their art with others, adding to their sense of pride in their achievements and the subject's prestige.
- Visitors and subject specialists feature regularly in the curriculum but as yet, opportunities for artists, designers or craftspeople have not been fully explored. The school plans to introduce Arts Week into the curriculum to raise the subject's profile and broaden pupils' experiences in the subject.
- The school is successfully engaging parents through the subject. The 'Share Project' provides good opportunities for parents to develop their understanding of how they can help their children at home in art and design through taster sessions regularly held in school.
- School journeys provide pupils with opportunities to develop their drawing from observation. Their work is exhibited on return to school.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The subject leader displays enthusiasm for the subject and through her leadership its profile is being raised in the curriculum. Her subject knowledge is satisfactory and she is extending this through attendance at conferences and by drawing on the advice of subject specialist advisors.
- The art and design policy is embedded in the whole school aims. It emphasises the need for a suitable balance between systematic teaching of skills, knowledge and understanding and opportunities for self-expression. This is not yet fully translated into everyday teaching and learning.
- Partnerships with arts organisations, local artists and links with the local comprehensive school are underdeveloped.
- Assessment of pupils' work is regular and the subject leader's detailed analysis of assessment information is leading to an improved understanding of standards in the subject. A portfolio of work is being gathered to exemplify these standards and to provide guidance for staff in accurately levelling and moderating pupils' work.
- A skills audit has identified areas where teachers' subject expertise requires strengthening and suitable training, provided by subject specialists, has been undertaken as a result.
- The subject leader is aware that monitoring and quality assurance activities are insufficiently rigorous to provide sufficient evidence for an evaluation of the school's performance in the subject.

## Subject issue

What is the impact of assessment on the progress and creativity of learners?

- The subject leader is beginning to gather a portfolio of pupils' work to support teachers in assessing pupils' work and progress more accurately.
- Assessment is timely, usually toward the end of a unit of work and pupils are included in evaluating their work. With the exception of the foundation stage, assessment tends to focus on skills development to the exclusion of evaluation of pupils' creativity.
- Comments in teacher's written assessments are too broad and do not specify what the pupils needs to do next in order to improve.

## Inclusion

- Pupils are sensitively supported in lessons so that they successfully complete their work.
- Boys and girls speak favourably about the subject and work with an equal level of enthusiasm in lessons.
- Gifted and talented pupils are identified through analysis of assessment information but this is underused in lesson planning with too much reliance on differentiation by outcome alone.
- Cultural differences in pupils' backgrounds are celebrated effectively through the subject in the foundation stage.
- The use of after school clubs to provide supplementary teaching of skills excludes some pupils from the chance to attend.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included to:

- develop the use of sketchbooks to promote continuity in drawing from direct observation
- apply greater rigour in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning
- allow more time in lessons for pupils to explore materials freely, make their own interpretations and represent their own thoughts, feelings and emotions in a variety of ways
- improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, designers and craftworkers from different times, cultures and countries
- develop assessment to define ways forward as well as to capture the level pupils have reached.

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