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12 December 2007

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Dear Mrs Gregory

Ofsted survey inspection programme – art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 4 December 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 three lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- On entry, pupils' creative skills are wide ranging; most are well below the expected level for their age. They make satisfactory progress in art and design over time to reach average standards of attainment by the time they leave the school.
- In the foundation stage, the pupils learn new skills, make choices from a wide range of materials and use their imagination freely. The adults ensure that creativity is encouraged making timely interventions to offer guidance and support balanced with well-chosen periods of observation. They are skilful in encouraging pupils with limited speaking skills to talk about their preferences and feelings. As a result,

the pupils make good progress towards the early learning goals; they are happy, confident individuals, keen to learn.

- Pupils' achievement in Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory. Their progress is carefully measured against National Curriculum levels. This enables the school to spot underachievement and adapt their planning to target specific skills.
- The work seen in sketchbooks shows that pupils' representational drawing is satisfactory. However, sketchbooks are currently underused as a special place for pupils to explore their ideas and to practise drawing skills.
- The pupils' design ideas are frequently used to for a specific purpose to improve the richly developed school grounds. Older pupils undertake projects to create lasting work for others to enjoy once they leave. This provides good opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively on a large scale making a valuable contribution to the community.
- Higher than average proportions of pupils have limited speaking skills and subject specific vocabulary to draw upon. Many lack confidence in expressing their ideas to an audience and this constrains their effectiveness in talking about and evaluating their own and each others' work.
- The pupils have a reasonable knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, craftworkers and designers of different times and cultures. However opportunities for them to deepen their understanding through extended study are few.
- The pupils enjoy the subject. When lessons allow for pupils to freely explore and experiment they work with interest and their behaviour is good.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Lessons are structured and based on satisfactory planning and assessment with clear intentions for what pupils will learn.
- Pupils' progress is regularly assessed, providing teachers with sound information about individual pupils' skills. Currently this information is not evaluated rigorously enough to identify where teaching can be targeted for improvement.
- Pupils' subject language is insufficiently developed to give them confidence in evaluating their own performance against explicit criteria.
- Teachers have adequate subject knowledge to demonstrate confidently and use resources effectively to motivate the pupils.
- The pupils have access to a range of media and tools and opportunities to make personal choices. Innovation is actively encouraged often leading to diverse and original finished work.
- The expertise of living artists through the Creative Partnerships programme is used effectively to promote and develop pupils' creativity in the subject.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum enables teachers and learners to meet the objectives of the foundation stage and the national curriculum.
- In the foundation stage, an extensive range of creative activities are on offer to promote pupils' creative development in the classroom but resources to encourage creative play outside are too limited.
- The school's scheme of work is under revision to ensure that new skills and techniques are introduced more systematically in order to promote progression more effectively.
- Pupils use computer software and digital photography confidently in art and design activities from an early age.
- The school flexibly uses allocated time for the subject to good purpose. For example, blocks of time are used appropriately for intensive extended projects. Effective links with other subjects are also made.
- Visiting artists, clubs, visits and subject specialists are strong features in the curriculum providing pupils with wide experience in the subject.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- The subject leader is effective. Enthusiastic and new to post, she provides direction about how the subject can be further developed, driven by her good subject knowledge informed by evidence from a detailed audit.
- Development planning is comprehensive with clear priorities for improvement in teaching and learning.
- The art and design policy is embedded in the whole school aims. Work on display is generally of good quality, frequently exhibiting the varied and original outcomes of pupils' work from the same starting points.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is regular and is carefully analysed by the subject leader adding to her very clear understanding of standards reached by pupils' in the subject.
- Teachers receive regular training to broaden their experience and strengthen their skills.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the subject is effective and clearly reported to the leadership team.
- Resources are well managed and effective links have been developed with the local secondary school.

Subject issue: the quality of assessment and its impact on pupils' progress and creativity

- Assessment takes place at regular intervals during the school year and provides teachers with a sound understanding of individuals' achievement in acquiring new skills.
- Assessment outcomes enable the school to identify pupils who are particularly gifted and talented in the subject.

- The impact of assessment on pupils' creativity is variable across the school. Where teachers' subject knowledge and expertise is strong they have the confidence to challenge pupils' creativity. When teachers have predetermined ideas about what the finished product will look like they question the originality of pupils' work insufficiently.

Inclusion

- Opportunities are frequently taken to develop pupils' awareness of living in a multicultural context through studies of art in other countries and cultures.
- The school's rigorous analysis of performance data in the subject includes comparisons of groups of pupils. This enables planning to be adjusted accordingly. For example, boys' underachievement has been identified and is currently being addressed through analysis of what they most enjoy and their preferred learning styles.
- The school is piloting a joint project to develop a creative room in the school bringing pupils with learning difficulties together with the most able. Ideas are being shared and incorporated into plans. This is effective in building pupils' self-esteem and developing awareness of the valuable contribution that all pupils can make.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- develop pupils' subject language to enable them to confidently evaluate their own and each others' work
- provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise, refine and develop their drawing skills
- further develop teachers' expertise in assessing pupils' work against the National Curriculum levels.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop art 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