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Dear Miss Holmes

Ofsted survey inspection programme – art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 6 December 2007 to look at work in art 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 and creativity. 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 three lessons or part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of art and design was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards in art and design

Achievement and standards are good.

- The pupils make good progress in the subject and reach above average standards. They enjoy their work, have excellent attitudes to learning and develop both confidence and good work habits.
- Good drawing enables pupils to analyse and record, providing a strong basis for further work. Sketchbooks are used effectively to record and develop work.

- The pupils have a good understanding of visual elements such as colour and tone. They use these well to represent what they see such as skilfully showing the tactile qualities of plants and flowers. The pupils' use of the same visual language to explore and express emotional responses to the world around them is less well developed.
- Pupils clearly understand the benefits of learning from other artists and make good use of what they learn to support their own work.
- They control art media well to develop ideas and some show outstanding ability to exploit the properties of materials for example of clay or relief printing.

Quality of teaching and learning in art and design

Teaching and learning in art and design are good.

- Lessons are well paced, offering a variety of ways to learn and building securely on all pupils' previous learning. There is a very good atmosphere for work, reflecting pupils' enthusiasm for the subject.
- The requirements of tasks within lessons are explained carefully to pupils so they understand the different stages involved. However, the features of high quality work are not always clarified so that pupils can refine what they are doing more independently.
- Teachers are good at demonstrating processes and introducing artists' work. Excellent use is made of electronic whiteboards to show visual materials in discussions; pupils respond well to the large images.
- The pupils' progress is closely monitored during lessons by both teachers and additional adults. Their differing needs are very well known and support is tailored accordingly.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in art and design is good with outstanding elements.

- The subject is highly valued. Pupils receive regular art and design sessions as well as using and developing what they learn in other areas of the curriculum, such as history.
- Pupils' experiences are well structured so that skills, knowledge and understanding are introduced and revisited in a logical order.
- Themes studied highlight the school's rural location with a considerable emphasis on the natural world. The art of other cultures is represented although relatively little reflects contemporary practice in other countries or the ethnic diversity of this country.
- Curriculum enrichment through artists in residence is outstanding. It gives pupils excellent opportunities to learn directly from artists and has a lasting impact on curriculum content.
- The curriculum rightly develops pupils' confidence to work from direct experience. Exploring art and design as a vehicle to communicate

emotion is less well represented although new curriculum plans are beginning to address this.

Leadership and management of art and design

The leadership and management of art and design are good.

- The joint coordination of art and design works well. Good support is provided for staff when planning and through much sharing of ideas. Staff development is well organised with advantage taken of opportunities such as the artists in residence to boost teachers' knowledge and make a lasting impact on the curriculum.
- Subject leaders work hard to move the subject forward. Development plans reflect priorities revealed by monitoring and evaluation and there is a strong track record of improvement over time. For example more use of computers and work in three dimensions was introduced last year. Nevertheless assessment information is not always referred to enough when identifying the impact of initiatives on pupils. Some success criteria in development plans relate to what will be provided rather than the intended difference made to pupils' learning.

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

- Regular assessment by teachers in lessons makes a good impact on pupils' learning. Guidance is sensitive to pupils' differing requirements and encourages pupils to develop individual responses.
- Pupils have good opportunities to assess their own work and that of others, for example through discussion. The pupils approach this with maturity and think carefully about how to improve their work, however some need to understand more clearly the criteria they should use to evaluate their work and define the next steps.
- Teachers monitor each pupil's progress well and use this to plan lessons, set goals for pupils and intervene if progress is too slow. The school supports this process by using national curriculum levels but more could be done to moderate their use.

Inclusion

Inclusion in art and design is good. Teachers enable all pupils to participate fully in lessons, planning experiences which engage and motivate all of them. Support is effective for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The curriculum appeals to all pupils and the school works hard to further adapt it. While all groups of pupils currently do equally well, insufficient reference is made to assessment information when evaluating the impact of the curriculum. This means the school is not well placed to identify groups of pupils, such as by gender or ability, should they start to underachieve.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- enable pupils to use visual language to explore and communicate their emotional responses to the world around them
- ensure pupils have a consistently good understanding of the criteria for assessing their work in lessons so they can decide what to do next
- improve the consistency of levelling and refer more to it when evaluating the impact of the curriculum and new initiatives on pupils as a whole and on different groups of pupils.

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

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector