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08 December 2007

Mr C Armstrong  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Armstrong

Ofsted Subjects & Survey Inspection Programme –art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff during my visit on 5 December 2007 to look at work in art and design.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key aspects 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 that 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 are published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgement made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons or part lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Children start school with creative skills that are below those typical for their age. When guided by adults and independently, they make good progress exploring and expressing their ideas in a good range of different materials.
- In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 structured lessons build well on pupils' previous learning. This leads to consistently good progress and most pupils reach good standards by the end of each stage.

- Using a broad range of materials pupils gain a rich experience of different techniques that enable them to express their ideas in two and three dimensions. Working from first-hand experience and imagination they develop confidence using practical craft skills and a good understanding of the process to design, make, improve and evaluate their work.
- Pupils are particularly enthusiastic when they have opportunities in open-ended projects to design and make three dimensional models. For instance, the challenge to design 'containers', 'seats' and 'environmental sculpture' captivated their interest and led to highly imaginative and carefully made artefacts.
- Pupils show a good understanding of contemporary art and that from different cultures and can explain its relationship to their own ideas, particularly when they work with living artists. For example, with an African artist to design and print large fabric banners and masks, or with a former coal miner to create imaginative paintings of mining scenes.
- Work in art makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. They are eager to share their knowledge often using technical terms and referring to artists' work they have studied. They use sketchbooks well to develop ideas and take pride in their work, describing in great detail how they created it and what skills they learned. This experience gives them a good basis for using art skills across the curriculum.

### Quality of teaching and learning in art and design

Teaching and learning in art and design are good.

- All pupils are taught in lessons each week by a specialist (higher level) teaching assistant. This provides excellent continuity because the teacher knows each child and their work very well. In turn she is able to make sure that pupils make consistent progress building on their previous work.
- Systematic and rigorous lesson plans use national materials very effectively to provide structured teaching of art skills. Objectives are clear and the activities planned challenge pupils to express their ideas in different media. There is, however, insufficient opportunity made for them to choose the size and scale of their work.
- Outcomes of lessons are evaluated by pupil and teacher alike. High quality displays and the collection of pupils' work in portfolios celebrates achievement and helps raise standards.
- Resources are good both in range and presentation. Teaching is enhanced by a regular programme of artists visiting school to work with pupils.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in art and design is good.

- From the Foundation Stage to Year 6 in regular lessons each week pupils experience a satisfactory range of two-dimensional, three-dimensional and

digital media. A carefully planned two year cycle of open-ended units of work give pupils good coverage of all visual elements and progression in learning skills and processes. There is, however, insufficient emphasis on developing pupils' drawing skills.

- Many opportunities are made for pupils to use their creative skills in other subjects are taken, for instance imaginative writing complementing paintings of winter landscapes or inspired by abstract encaustic wax painting. Provision is enriched by an art club and by visits to galleries and to see sculpture in the local area.
- Planned links in lessons to the work of Western European artists and designers is enhanced by visits to school by African and Chinese artists. This enriches pupils' cultural experience and provides good opportunities for cross-curricular learning.
- A good feature is that the local mining heritage is used: to extend pupils' understanding about the history of their village and as a focus for creative work in art and which is effectively linked to literacy and history.

### Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management of the subject are good.

- Over the past two years since the school's previous inspection you have worked with a higher level teaching assistant to lead the subject. This strong partnership has created both vision and improved provision to raise the profile and standards. This is underpinned by regular meetings to evaluate the curriculum, allocation of regular specialist teaching time and the consistent use of national teaching materials.
- Displays, photographic records and portfolios of pupils' work are used to check the effectiveness of teaching and plan for progression. Reflection, enthusiasm and self-evaluation are significant elements of leadership that transfer to pupils.

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

- A manageable and straightforward assessment system is in the second year of operation. This is integrated in each unit of work. You and a specialist teacher evaluate what each pupil has achieved in terms of their match to specific skills and expectations. This monitoring is recorded and is used informally to help plan the next stage of work and identify where pupils need extra help or to stretch those who are gifted/talented. Use is made of national reference material to judge pupils' level at the end of each Key Stage and is increasingly used to track and record pupils' progress.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to evaluate their work, both in discussion in lessons and by completing self-evaluation at the end of each unit. This ensures they know what they have done and where they need to improve.
- Assessment is having an increasing impact on developing pupils' progress and creativity. This is because it highlights both their progression over time

and their individual way of learning, which can then be used to set them work which meet their specific need.

## Inclusion

Inclusion is good. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities take a full part the weekly art lessons and other activities. The carefully planned curriculum, appeals equally to boys and girls and is enhanced by opportunity for them to relate to artists' work. Teaching across the school by the specialist teaching assistant is a good feature, because it means she knows all pupils well and can take good account of their specific needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- provide more opportunity for pupils to select and vary the scale of their work
- increase opportunities for pupils to develop drawing skills.

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

Michael Haynes  
Additional Inspector