

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs C Moss
Headteacher
St Bernadette's RC Primary School
160 Long Lane
Hillingdon
Uxbridge
Middlesex
UB10 0EH

Dear Mrs Moss

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 January 2008 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 seven part lessons.

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

Achievement and standards in art and design

Achievement and standards are inadequate.

- The children make a good start in the visual areas of their creative development during the Foundation Stage. They enjoy their work and use it well to explore and understand the world around them.
- In Years 1 and 2, achievement slows because teaching is not always effective. Nevertheless the pupils make satisfactory progress and standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2.
- Between Years 3 and 6 the pupils achieve too little. There is insufficient reinforcement of earlier learning and standards are below average. Pupils continue to enjoy the subject but do not develop the systematic

control of materials and elements of the visual language, such as colour, in order to record what they see or communicate mood and emotion through visual means. Exploration and refinement of ideas, for example in sketchbooks, is weak as are pupils' skills in analysing the work of other artists to support their own studies.

- Pupils of all ages behave well in lessons, sharing equipment co-operatively and respecting each others' work.

Quality of teaching and learning in art and design

Teaching and learning in art and design are inadequate.

- Teaching has strengths in the Foundation Stage. Work is well planned to challenge each child, enable them to take responsibility for making decisions about their work and to be experimental. Learning in the Reception classes is impeded however by cramped classrooms.
- In Years 1 and 2, most lessons are well structured with some good use made of artefacts and examples of artists' work to stimulate learning. Pupils continue to be encouraged to try things out and take risks but the pace of learning is slower because their differing needs are less well planned for and some do not understand well enough what to do.
- For older pupils, teachers are keen to teach the subject well but their subject knowledge is weak. Planning consistently makes too little reference to pupils' prior attainment in order to support them or set appropriately challenging expectations. In lessons, key learning points, such as how composition can create depth, are not explained properly and techniques are not always modelled well enough. The pace of learning over time is therefore too slow.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in art and design is inadequate.

- The subject leader, since taking on the role last year, has begun to address a legacy of poor progression in learning. Well planned Foundation Stage experiences are not capitalised on in later years. Nationally recognised units of work have been adopted to provide a base for planning in Years 1 to 6; however teachers lack confidence in adapting these to meet the pupils' needs or to reflect their interests.
- The subject is delivered in concentrated blocks of time each term. While this has advantages as an immersive experience it prevents skills and knowledge developing over time as pupils forget what they have learnt. Although pupils use their subject learning in other curriculum areas, this is poorly mapped to ensure best use is made of such opportunities.
- Pupils gain too little experience of contemporary practice in art, craft or design and are unfamiliar with the role of galleries and exhibitions.

Leadership and management of art and design

The leadership and management of art and design are inadequate.

- In the time she has been leading art and design the subject leader has begun to move things in the right direction. She has identified areas for improvement such as the curriculum and assessment and has begun to make an impact, although there remains a considerable way to go so that pupils achieve all they should.
- Monitoring and evaluation is embryonic. The range of evidence used to define strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievement and in the quality of provision is too narrow. Consequently development planning, while including some appropriate goals, is not comprehensive and success criteria are not clear enough.
- Crucial support for teachers subject knowledge is starting to be provided but the good practice in the school is not shared effectively or supported by examples of good practice from external sources.

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

- Assessment in lessons is inconsistent. For older pupils, success criteria are not always explicit enough to enable them to assess and refine their work. Regular discussions between teachers and pupils are not productive because weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge mean guidance sometimes lacks precision and teachers do not routinely use the outcomes to check the progress being made. Marking is patchy.
- Tracking pupils' progress over time and setting targets is effective in the Foundation Stage but only now beginning to develop in the rest of the school. This makes it difficult for teachers to plan learning to meet pupils' individual needs or to identify and tackle underachievement.
- Assessment information is not exploited fully as a management tool to identify areas of provision requiring improvement or measure the impact of previous initiatives.

Inclusion

Inclusion in art and design is inadequate. While teachers aspire to include all pupils in the subject, learning is not planned well enough nor are the outcomes for different pupils or groups of pupils monitored effectively, to ensure this happens and take action if it does not. Additional support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is ineffective over time because the very good knowledge the school has of these pupils is not used to enable them to access learning in lessons. Provision for more able pupils is limited, both in lessons and in relation to additional activities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- with particular attention to classes in Years 3 to 6, raise teachers' expectations, improve their subject knowledge and ensure assessment information is used to plan lessons which meet the pupils' differing needs so that achievement is faster
- provide more regular art and design lessons each term and broader experience of art, craft and design including contemporary practice
- enable pupils to assess their own work better so as to refine and develop their ideas more independently

- support the subject leader in making reference to a wider range of evidence when reviewing subject effectiveness, planning the next steps forward and providing guidance and support for her colleagues.

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