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Mr J Sargent  
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Dear Mr Sargent

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 February 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 nine 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.

- Progress is inadequate because, although pupils enjoy the subject and behave well, their activities are not purposeful enough to build learning over the longer term. As a result, standards are below average.
- Pupils' skills in controlling materials and using the elements of the visual language such as colour to depict what they see are below average. They also make too little progress in using the same visual

language to communicate and develop ideas from imagined or remembered starting points.

- While the pupils know there is much to be learned from other artists and designers, their ability to analyse the work of others and use it to support their own studies is underdeveloped.
- Pupils' skills in evaluating and refining work are poor. Sketchbooks show limited evidence of pupils taking the initiative in moving their work on and, as a consequence, there is little individuality in outcomes.

## Quality of teaching and learning in art and design

Teaching and learning in art and design are inadequate.

- Teachers want to teach the subject well but have weak subject expertise.
- Planning does not give sufficient consideration to pupils' differing needs or clarify key learning points to help teachers prepare lessons properly.
- Lessons enable the completion of work but pupils often have a fragile grasp of what they are doing or why. Learning objectives and success criteria are not always clear to pupils, practical techniques are not demonstrated well enough and some tasks do not enable learning objectives to be met.
- Teachers do not assess progress effectively during lessons, for example through questioning, to adapt their teaching if too little is achieved.
- Teachers have good skills in managing time, equipment and work areas safely and relationships with pupils are good.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in art and design is satisfactory.

- Subject coverage meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and pupils have access to a reasonable range of materials, techniques and processes.
- Pupils respond well to the themes studied although their opportunities to make work about themselves and their interests are limited.
- There are growing strengths in linking the study of the subject to other curriculum areas. However, it is not always clear what aspects of subject knowledge, skills and understanding have been developed when links are made.
- Extending the curriculum through contact with local arts organisations is strengthening pupils' understanding of creative practice in their area and strengthening their knowledge of contemporary artists and designers.

## Leadership and management of art and design

The leadership and management of art and design are inadequate.

- The school has high aspirations for the role of the arts as a whole in the curriculum. However subject leadership in art and design is not contributing effectively to these plans.
- Monitoring and evaluation is inadequate. The subject leader is unaware of strengths in provision or areas requiring improvement because neither the quality of provision nor pupils' achievement are analysed. New expectations of the role of all subject leaders in monitoring and evaluation have been drawn up recently but have yet to make an impact in art and design.
- There is no effective strategic plan for subject development.
- The weakness of teachers' subject knowledge reflects a legacy of too little professional development.

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

- No information is gathered about pupils' attainment on entry so learning does not reliably build on what they already know and can do.
- Pupils' attainment is not monitored properly over time nor are targets set. This hinders the planning of lessons to meet pupils' varying needs as well as the identification and remedying of any underachievement.
- Assessment within lessons makes an inadequate impact on learning. Pupils' lack of clarity over the criteria for successful work is exacerbated by poor modelling of the assessment process by teaching staff and means pupils do not develop the ability to move their work forward themselves. There is little evidence of marking of pupils' work.
- A lack of information about pupils' achievement means subject leadership lacks a vital tool in identifying areas of provision requiring improvement or measuring the impact of previous developments.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in art and design is inadequate. Although the school hopes to include all pupils, learning is not planned well enough to meet all of their needs. Not enough is known about pupils' achievement to check that all are properly provided for and to take action if they are not. Teaching assistants provide good support in lessons for pupils who require help managing their behaviour but do not always provide good enough subject specific guidance.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve the subject knowledge of teaching staff so they are more confident in their planning and teaching

- ensure accurate information is available about pupils' progress so that learning can be planned to meet their varying needs and underachievement can be systematically identified and tackled
- develop pupils' independence in deciding how to improve their work
- strengthen subject monitoring and evaluation so there is a clear basis for planning improvements and a means to measure the impact made.

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