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14 February 2008

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Dear Mrs Ross

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 7 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 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.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- On entry, children's skills, knowledge and understanding are generally in line with expectations. Provision in the foundation stage leads to good progress with an above average proportion of children working beyond the early learning goals in creative development at the end of the Reception Year. A wide range of activities provide children with opportunities to learn new skills. The outdoor area is used very effectively to extend children's creative skills as they enthusiastically

participate in dance, art and music, and immerse themselves in uninhibited imaginative play.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress between Years 1 and 6. Inconsistency in the school's approach to assessment leaves some teachers unsure of how to guide pupils in developing their skills and improving their work. This leads to uneven progress over time. For example, work in sketchbooks shows that there is sometimes little variation between pupils' drawing skills from one year to the next.
- The pupils are, however, creative individuals especially in the early years because they are given freedom of choice and are sufficiently confident to experiment as a result. Work seen in most displays around the school is original and imaginative.
- The pupils' knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, designers and craftworkers is satisfactory.
- The pupils say that they enjoy the subject. They work with interest and use tools safely. The subject makes a valuable contribution in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- Planning is thorough, related to clear learning intentions and lessons are organised effectively. Teaching assistants are deployed appropriately to support learning.
- The best teaching is typified by selective intervention and quality discussion with pupils about their choices and finished pieces. In these lessons, the teachers focus on assessing pupils' work and relate this to national curriculum levels so they know how to plan the next steps.
- In all lessons seen, pupils have freedom to make independent choices and this supports their creativity.
- The school has identified assessment as a means of raising standards. Approaches to assessment in the subject are variable. Some teachers' expertise in assessing and levelling pupils' work is currently underdeveloped.

### Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features.

- Resources are varied, tempting and plentiful.
- The curriculum enables teachers and learners to meet the objectives of the foundation stage and the National Curriculum. However, the scheme of work is content driven rather than skills focussed.
- Themed days are used very effectively to develop pupils' skills in art and design. For example, in Key Stage 1 pupils celebrated Chinese New Year making collages on large and small scales and painting. Artefacts, costume, images and music set the scene and using all their senses provided pupils with a rich and inspiring experience.
- Pupils use computer software and digital photography satisfactorily in art and design activities from an early age.

- The curriculum is responsive to the pupils' experiences and local influences. For example, the school participates in the local tradition of 'Well dressing' making a group picture from local clay and natural materials which is exhibited in the village alongside others.
- The parents' association funds visiting artists to work and share their skills with pupils. Recently, Year 6 made a valuable contribution to the community creating some very large and striking banners for the new school hall under the direction of a living artist.

## Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The school has adopted an integrated approach to leadership of arts subjects. As a result, the arts co-ordinator (a music specialist) has limited subject knowledge in art and design. The subject is managed competently in terms of monitoring teaching and learning, evaluating units of work and ensuring availability of resources. However, there is little of the confidence and flair often associated with visionary leadership in the subject.
- There is no specific strategic plan in place to develop the subject. However, assessment, including art and design is a priority in the school's improvement plan.
- The subject leader organises professional development activities for staff including visits to galleries, participation in workshops and opportunities for staff to work alongside living artists.

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

- Assessment systems are inconsistent. There is evidence of some good practice in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 where ongoing assessment of pupils' work enables teachers to know where their lesson planning should be pitched and where pupils need to go next. Plans are in place to develop this into Key Stage 2 to accelerate pupils' progress and to raise standards of attainment.
- Helpful comments are given in response to pupils' work in their sketchbooks. These are sometimes written directly on the pupils' work which is intrusive and compromises its aesthetic quality.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work in writing.
- Currently there are no exemplification materials available to assist staff in evaluating the quality of pupils' work.

## Inclusion

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported ensuring their full access to the curriculum. Those with special gifts and talents are identified and encouraged although there are few opportunities for them to attend master classes or special events. The curriculum has been developed to ensure that units of work capture the imagination of boys and girls so that both genders enjoy the subject. As a largely monocultural community, the

school ensures that art from different countries and cultures is studied to broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of different cultural and religious influences.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the use of sketchbooks
- improving consistency in approaches to assessment to move pupils' learning on and raise standards
- sharpening teachers' knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject so that they support pupils' learning with greater confidence.

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