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Mrs A Mills
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Dear Mrs Mills

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 05 March 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.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- In the Foundation Stage, pupils' skills in creative development on entry are above expectations. The range of creative activities is broad and pupils are able to respond well to opportunities to explore colour, texture, shape, form and space in two and three dimensions. The pupils articulate their thoughts and feelings freely as they work, confident in their approach to drawing, painting, designing and

making. They manipulate tools with precision in making pictures and decorating objects. Some of the activities are not designed well enough to allow for exploration and discovery and the pupils are generally guided towards activities rather than making individual choices. This constrains their development as creative individuals.

- Pupils' achievement through Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory. As a result of effective and systematic teaching of skills, a good proportion of pupils reach above average standards particularly in painting and drawing. Nonetheless, their creative development is hampered by over direction with too few opportunities for pupils to make choices and explore the potential of materials and media.
- The work seen in sketchbooks shows that pupils make good progress in developing their drawing skills. However, sketchbooks are underused as a special place for pupils to explore and record their ideas or record the personal journeys they have taken from shared starting points.
- The pupils frequently make art that is personally meaningful to them, working alongside living artists such as stained glass windows, a ceramic tile plaque and large scale wall hangings and pictures. The older pupils talk about these fondly. They are long lasting works of art that have had an impact on their very good spiritual, social and emotional development.
- The pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the work of European artists, craftworkers and designers of different times in history. However their knowledge of art from different cultures and continents and particularly that of female artists is more restricted.
- The pupils show a high level of enjoyment in the subject. They discuss the work of artists thoughtfully explaining what they think and feel about their work.

Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- Teaching focuses mainly on developing pupils' experience of materials and processes. As a result, pupils produce images and artefacts to a good standard.
- The pupils have access to a range of media and tools but opportunities to make personal choices are too limited leading to a lack of originality and diversity in finished work.
- Lessons are structured and based on good planning and assessment with clear intentions for what pupils will learn.
- Pupils are increasingly being encouraged to evaluate their own work however, the criteria for success is not always specified. As a result, their own assessments focus mainly on what they can do rather than how well they do it.
- The higher level teaching assistant makes a major contribution to the delivery of the art and design curriculum in Key Stage 2. Her personal interest in the subject enables her to support and challenge learners.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The needs and abilities of most learners are well served by the curriculum through systematic implementation of the school's satisfactory scheme of work for art and design. This ensures that pupils do not repeat units of work in mixed age classes.
- The curriculum in the Foundation Stage supports pupils adequately in developing and refining their skills in using tools and materials. However, opportunities for pupils to have more autonomy in their learning are too limited.
- Effective links with other subjects are made especially with history and information and communication technology. The pupils use computer software confidently in design activities from an early age.
- The curriculum introduces pupils to a satisfactory range of artists, craftworkers and designers but there is insufficient balance in studies of male and female artists.

Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The new headteacher has revised the way that foundation subjects are led and managed in this small school. With no subject specialist on the staff she has developed an appropriate model of dispersed leadership where staff pool their expertise and jointly monitor the effectiveness of the subject. However, opportunities to draw upon the expertise of specialists in local schools and community art groups to strengthen subject knowledge and leadership have not yet been fully considered.
- The art and design policy is firmly embedded in the whole school aims.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is regular and teachers have an accurate understanding of standards reached by pupils in the subject. However, the assessment system does not yet extend to an evaluation of pupils' creativity in the subject. The staff know the pupils very well and identify those with special gifts and talents as well as those requiring additional support to succeed.
- The staff have undertaken a full audit of the subject's effectiveness highlighting strengths and identifying areas for further development.
- Links with other schools, gallery educators and community art groups are currently underdeveloped.

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

- Assessment systems are consistent. Ongoing assessment of pupils' work enables teachers to know where their lesson planning should be pitched and where pupils need to go next.

- 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 regular opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work orally and in writing.
- Currently there are no exemplification materials available to assist staff in evaluating the quality of pupils' work.

Inclusion

Subject provision is inclusive. The small size of year groups enables teachers to personalise the learning to meet the needs and abilities of all learners. 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.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the use of sketchbooks
- providing more opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to develop their creativity and autonomy in learning
- developing links with local schools and agencies to extend teachers' expertise and subject knowledge.

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