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Mrs E Travers
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Dear Mrs Travers

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 08 July 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 short observations of four lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- On entry, children's creative skills are well below expectations. They make good progress towards the Foundation Stage early learning goals for imagination, expressing ideas and exploring media and materials. However, there is a better range of attractive activities to promote creative development in the Nursery than in Reception. This is particularly evident in outdoor play provision which is more varied and inviting in the Nursery. The children explore and share their thoughts,

ideas and feelings through a variety of activities such as music making, role play, drawing, painting and modelling. However, some adults concentrate solely on managing one activity missing opportune moments to intervene when children are pursuing their own creative ideas and need guidance, for example, in using tools in order to progress.

- Through Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make the expected progress in the subject and reach targets typical of their age, ability and context. They make appropriate use of materials, techniques and processes to communicate their ideas. Their art is competently executed but often lacks originality except when they work alongside living artists. In work completed during a Creative Partnerships project the pupils boldly mix media and develop diverse outcomes.
- Pupils show satisfactory knowledge and understanding of artists, designers and craftworkers. The school has an over-arching curriculum plan for these studies to ensure pupils' exposure to a good range. Teachers use the electronic whiteboards expertly to inspire pupils with images of art from different times and cultures and help them to develop confidence and expertise in analysing the visual qualities in others' work. Exploring the different effects and moods that colour can create one pupil exclaimed, 'You get a warm bounce coming off that picture', whilst another described the same image as 'a warm lava lamp'.
- The work seen in pupils' sketchbooks is variable in quality. Generally sketchbooks are not used well enough for pupils to explore and investigate ideas.
- There is ample opportunity for pupils to work collaboratively. This supports them in developing good personal skills to benefit their lifelong learning.
- Girls and boys of all abilities enjoy the subject and take a full part in lessons. The school provides a very high level of adult support to ensure success for all for example, by breaking processes down into very small achievable steps or modelling skills for pupils who find learning difficult.

Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Teachers plan pupils' work carefully according to specific objectives and with a purpose in mind. Year 6 pupils create collages to 'sell' on E-Bay complete with a sound bite recording to attract potential buyers and Year 4 pupils decorate masks fit for an Anglo-Saxon king. However, teachers tend to have a particular outcome in mind rather than encouraging pupils to explore the full potential of materials and media to produce original finished pieces.
- Teachers' explanations are clear, confident and demonstrate sufficient subject knowledge. However, teaching sometimes overemphasises potential pitfalls limiting opportunity for pupils to take risks, learn by mistakes and use their initiative.
- Lessons are efficiently organised and well resourced. They move along at a brisk pace in an atmosphere of industry and purpose. Older pupils are expected to plan their work according to the time available ensuring that it is used productively.

- Relationships are good and teachers know their pupils' capabilities well. This enables them to provide timely and apportioned support and guidance enabling those that are confident to stride ahead.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in their art lessons and they use tools and materials carefully.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum enables teachers and learners to meet the objectives of the Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum. It is organised in half termly units enabling pupils to revisit and develop their work over time.
- Curriculum planning makes good links with other subjects especially in history, religious education and information and communication technology, enabling pupils to apply and practise their art and design skills.
- Technology is used effectively both by teachers and pupils to support learning. Pupils are given a range of opportunities to use computer software to explore colour and pattern and regularly use the internet to research artists' work.
- Visits to local galleries, museums and arts centres extend pupils' experiences in the subject.
- Events such as Art Week add to pupils' enjoyment of the subject. They also take part in local competitions and have their work exhibited in the community. This contributes to their sense of pride in their accomplishments.
- External funding is used judiciously to provide out of hours art workshops for which the take up is high.

Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management in art and design are good.

- The subject has a high profile in the school. The recently retired long standing subject leader led the subject with passion and commitment. Interim arrangements are securely in place ensuring the subject continues to be well managed. The headteacher is rightly mindful that there is now a gap in subject expertise to assure its strategic development and future direction. Options and solutions are under consideration.
- The interim subject leader has excellent organisational skills and uses them expertly to systematically monitor and evaluate the subject's effectiveness across key stages. Nonetheless, opportunities to observe the quality of teaching are few.
- Displays of art work around the school are plentiful and eye catching although some large pieces are in need of renovation after a long period of time on exhibition.
- A governor regularly monitors the school's provision and shows great interest in the subject ensuring that its high profile is maintained.
- Professional relationships with other educational settings and local artists, craftworkers and designers are well developed.

- The accessibility and meticulous maintenance of resources is impressive.

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

This is satisfactory and developing well.

- In the Foundation Stage assessment is used effectively to inform daily planning so that pupils' learning builds on what they know and can do.
- Teachers assess pupils' attainment regularly and the school's focus on pupils' assessing their own work is developing well.
- The subject leader is developing portfolios of work to provide exemplification materials for staff. The portfolio for drawing is good with clear annotations explaining progression. A similar collection for painting is underway.
- Pupils' performance in each unit of the scheme of work is evaluated to highlight their achievement and to adapt future curriculum planning.
- Pupil interviews are effective in assessing pupils' depth of knowledge and understanding and to gauge their enjoyment.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- achieve greater balance between teachers' objective led planning and pupils' creativity
- strengthen pupils' creative behaviours such as risk-taking and self-confidence in using initiative
- develop pupils' use of sketchbooks.

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