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10 June 2008

Mr S Fisher
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Dear Mr Fisher

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10 June 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 observations of four lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory

- Pupils make satisfactory progress overall but standards are inconsistent within and across years. Work in lessons visited included good work.
- Their practical work includes 2D, 3D and use of digital media that is handled with care and expressed with imagination.
- Knowledge and understanding of different artists, craftworkers and designers is too limited to impact on pupils' own creative ambitions.

- Pupils make adequate use of sketchbooks to develop ideas but they are insufficiently used to record observations, experiences or evaluations.
- Boys and girls with different abilities enjoy the subject. Most co-operate well in collaborative projects. Some show leadership skills.
- Pupils show sensitivity when criticising the work of their peers but not all participate in discussion or volunteer answers to questions.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used confidently and creatively by boys and girls with different ability in other subjects.
- Pupils' experimentation with art media and scale varies from tentative to bold. However, observation skills are generally underdeveloped.

Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- All lessons observed were well prepared and enthusiastically taught. Objectives were shared clearly with pupils and supported by examples.
- The sample chosen to represent work across the school indicated that subject knowledge and skills are reinforced or applied too infrequently.
- Teachers manage practical activities well. Resources are organised efficiently and in some lessons pupils are challenged to improvise.
- ICT is used effectively as a teaching tool to share images but the use of original artefacts or first hand experience is underdeveloped.
- Teachers share their own knowledge, experience and skills effectively. In one lesson observed the teachers' own work clearly set a standard.
- Questions provoke a good response from particular pupils but the understanding of passive pupils could be challenged more directly.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well ensuring that all abilities are engaged. Support staff reinforce pupils' learning appropriately.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- There is adequate coverage of major art themes inspired by the natural and built environment, personal identity and imagination.
- Lessons observed were effective because individual teachers had interpreted the scheme of work which committed them to its success.
- Key Stage planning for progression is weak in ensuring that pupils develop their understanding of and ability to use visual language.
- When real contexts are used such as the design of the new school gates, pupils are able to learn about the applications of the subject.
- Connections between the work of artists, craftworkers and designers and pupils' work rely too much on the use of secondary sources.
- Other subjects are linked effectively when art objectives are clear. For example, using line and expressing imagination in response to the 'Vikings' topic.
- Curriculum continuity with the previous and subsequent key stages is underdeveloped.

Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management in art and design are satisfactory.

- A recent review of schemes of work has led to the introduction of a new scheme which has brought about improvement in standards.
- Materials and resources linked to 'making' art are well managed but there are missed opportunities, such as existing visits, to apply learning.
- The specialist art studio provides an excellent resource for large scale projects and visiting artists.
- Skills developed during teacher training are deployed well. The use of ICT by Year 6 and 3D skills in Year 3 are underpinned by well informed teachers.
- Questionnaires used with staff indicate that professional development as a whole school is a need, for example to use clay confidently.
- Monitoring of the subject by outcome has not exposed or addressed inconsistencies in teaching but a rolling programme of focused evaluation is scheduled to start soon.
- The development of a portfolio to exemplify standards was identified as a priority in 2005 but remains an area for development.

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

This is inadequate.

- Assessments in the subject are insufficiently regular or focused to promote pupils' progress.
- Whilst pupils enjoy experimentation its impact on their creative development is insufficiently explicit to pupils.
- In lessons teachers are supportive and help pupils to improve their work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- promote pupils' progress by identifying the most effective subject teaching and making it more consistent and continuous
- develop the role of sketchbooks by agreeing and implementing a range of purposes across the curriculum and in the subject
- embed the new scheme of work by increasing pupils' first hand experience of original art and opportunities to work large scale
- improve assessment by identifying assessment opportunities that focus on subject skills, for example observation and creativity.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop art and design across 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

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector