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Mr T Cocking
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Dear Mr. Cocking

Ofsted subject survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 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 over-arching question "How inclusive is the subject?". This involved looking at the achievement of boys compared with girls in Art, Craft and Design, the range of the school's Art, Craft and Design curriculum and the impact of assessment on the progress and creativity of pupils in Art, Craft and Design.

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 four members of staff, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work during lessons and on display in the school, and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of Art and design was judged to be inadequate.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in the subject are inadequate

- There are some satisfactory aspects to the personal development of pupils through art in the younger years. For example, pupils are able to talk to each other about the direction of group work, and they learn to share materials and equipment.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1.
- Progress in Key Stage 2 slows significantly. Pupils in Year 4 do not show any clear development of art skills from Year 3, and Year 6 pupils have not done enough art work of sufficient quality and range to allow them to reach appropriate standards by the end of their time at the school.
- There is insufficient evidence of pupils' exploration of materials, or ability to develop expressive or creative skills which could contribute to their personal development and improve their attainment. For these reasons, achievement and standards are inadequate.
- Pupils in all years show very good behaviour, and have good relationships with their teachers and each other.

Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

Teaching and Learning is satisfactory overall

- The quality of teaching and learning is variable. Although adequate it is weaker in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1.
- Art teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes encourages pupils' exploration of materials, builds their confidence and allows for personal expression.
- In Years 1 and 2, teaching encourages pupils to work together and to enjoy experimenting with art materials.
- In Years 3 and 4, whilst subject teaching promotes a secure classroom atmosphere and encourages pupils to work conscientiously, too many closely directed tasks constrains pupils' creativity and independence.
- In Years 5 and 6, teachers help pupils to understand, for example, how art can provide insights into people, places and periods of time in which art has been created. However, not enough is done to help them develop confidence, creative aspirations or achievement in the subject.
- Teaching throughout the school promotes a secure and well ordered classroom environment, and during lessons careful attention is given to groups and individuals. Teachers use questioning and plenary sessions well to ensure that each pupil is given opportunities to form and express ideas. However, limited subject knowledge constrains teachers' improvisation or ability to help pupils transform their ideas into actions.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is inadequate

- The school has a suitable art and design policy which takes account of National Curriculum requirements. The policy sets out suitable aims such as to develop and encourage pupils' creativity so that they become confident and enthusiastic artists.
- The curriculum covers key areas of experience in the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, and uses the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work as a basis for planning units of work and projects.

- The scheme of work is insufficiently tailored to the school, its context, and the individual interests and needs of pupils at the school. The curriculum is broad in terms of concepts and themes covered, but in practice it provides insufficient guidance about developing and deepening individual pupils' art skills, knowledge and understanding to appropriate levels.
- Topics such as "Portraying Relationships" and "Sense of Place" have the potential to encourage lively and creative work but insufficient guidance has been developed to help teachers use the scheme of work to fulfil the school's aims for the subject.

Leadership and management of the subject

Leadership and management of the subject are inadequate

- Evidence of pupils' achievements in the subject at the end of Key Stage 2 show that weaknesses in subject leadership and management have constrained pupils' progress in the past.
- There is currently no subject leader for Art and design but you have taken appropriate action to identify and address existing inadequacies. A robust action plan is now in place but the impact on standards and achievement are not yet evident.
- The staff have recently completed an extensive self-evaluation focusing on provision in the subject. The key issues and areas for improvement have been identified accurately. Whilst staff agree there is more to do they remain positive and enthusiastic about developing the subject.

Subject issue:

Given the limited volume of pupils' art work provided by the school at the time of the visit it was not possible to make a judgement on all aspects of the subject issue, particularly the inclusion and achievement of boys and girls. In lessons observed the inclusion of individuals and groups of pupils was satisfactory. The range of the curriculum is inadequate. Assessment of art and design has not been addressed by the school, and has had little impact on pupils' progress and creativity in the subject.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

Improve pupils' achievements, standards and creativity in the subject by;

- developing a curriculum relevant to the school, its context and pupils
- increasing the level of challenge in lessons, particularly in Key Stage 2
- improving the use of assessment to promote pupils' progression
- providing sustainable subject leadership and management.

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

Peter Jones
Additional Inspector