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Mrs S Dennis  
Headteacher  
Brunswick House Primary School  
Leafy Lane  
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ME16 0QQ

Dear Mrs Dennis

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Creative Learning

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 05 June 2008 to look at creative learning.

As outlined in my initial letter, the visit had a particular focus on the ways in which you develop creative learning and the impact this is having on achievement and standards and on pupils' personal development.

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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of your school's development of creative learning was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Although results in national tests taken by Year 6 pupils dipped in 2007, with levels of attainment broadly in line with national averages, there is evidence of high quality work in all year groups whenever pupils have the opportunity to root their learning in an extended sequence of 'hands on' investigation, collaborative problem-solving, guided role play and cross-curricular enquiry. They use a variety of technical resources with confidence and, in many cases, flair, especially information and communication technology (ICT). This approach to learning has a positive impact on the motivation and performance of previously tentative or reluctant readers and writers,

especially boys. The challenge for the school now is to find ways in which to help pupils draw upon these learning experiences when tackling formal tests.

Approaches to learning in science and mathematics have not so far been as successful in raising standards and building confidence as those in other areas of the curriculum. The pupils speak of finding some concepts difficult to grasp, not least because they are harder to present as day-to-day realities rather than intellectual abstracts. Teachers are developing schemes of work and approaches to using and applying mathematics, problem-solving and handling data that are perceptibly improving pupils' understanding of mathematical principles and processes. A more consistently enquiry-based approach to science and more creative methods for recording practical work are also being developed. The impact on formal test results has yet to be seen.

The impact on pupils' personal development is striking. Pupils of all ages and abilities speak with confidence and enthusiasm about their learning and clearly feel safe amongst their classmates and with adults. They are keen to do well and are generous in celebrating others' successes as well as their own.

#### Quality of teaching and learning

All the teaching observed was at least good; some was outstanding, characterised by lively pace, an imaginative use of analogies to illustrate points, stimulating use of ICT and, most strikingly, the ability to excite children into independent thinking and enquiry. Feedback during lessons and in the marking of written work is always encouraging but not always sufficiently clear about what pupils should do to make progress. On occasion, teachers' responses do not test and sharpen pupils' understanding of what could be learnt from the activity. Peer and self-evaluation are currently being developed as part of the school's creative learning strategy.

Schemes of work and lesson planning benefit from a collaborative approach and balance the need to remain rooted in national curriculum content with a strong commitment to cross-curricular and investigative working. Building on the experience of past projects, run with support from the government-funded Creative Partnerships scheme, the school uses a multi-sensory approach to learning that successfully stimulates and engages learners of all abilities. Pupils speak fluently and enthusiastically about projects such as 'Invaders and settlers' and 'Flow' that bring together history, geography, design and technology, literature, drama and art. The impact on their learning is evident, both in the detailed understanding they show of topics explored in this way – what made the design of Roman shields so effective, for example – and in their personal writing. The process, say pupils, is fun and the end product worthwhile.

#### Quality of the curriculum

Care is taken to ensure that National Curriculum content and skills are well covered; this is clear in subject and year group planning. This core is then

successfully extended to provide many and varied opportunities for creative learning, both on and off the school site. Visits and visitors, hands on experience of traditional crafts such as paper-making, creation of a video diary: all these are characteristic of the school's extended curriculum and their positive impact can be tracked through pupils' follow-up work.

### Leadership and management

Your clear and consistent commitment to the development of pupils' independence, key skills, inventiveness and sense of self-worth is well supported by your leadership team and staff. Each subject leader includes the fostering and evaluation of emotional intelligence, cross-curricular links and creativity in their action plans. Middle managers clearly share these priorities and lead their teams effectively. All staff are encouraged to make a significant contribution to the school's development of more creative learning, supported by well judged professional development. Opportunities to extend pupils' experiences and complement staff skills through partnerships with other schools and colleges and with a range of creative practitioners are fully exploited.

### Equality and diversity

The school's development of more active, less formalised approaches to learning and assessment encourages students of all abilities and backgrounds to take part confidently. This is an inclusive and cohesive community, in which all students are treated with affectionate respect and given many opportunities to achieve.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that feedback, both in class and in the marking of work, offers challenge and specific guidance on how to improve, as well as encouragement
- developing ways to help pupils draw on previous learning experiences when tackling formal tests.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop creative styles of learning in your school.

As explained in our 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

Patricia Metham  
Her Majesty's Inspector