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Miss V Kavanaugh  
Headteacher  
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Dear Miss Kavanaugh

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Creative Learning

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 02 July to look at creative learning.

As outlined in our 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 students' 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of how creative learning is developed was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards and personal development

Creative modes of learning have had a positive effect on achievement and personal development. Achievement is good for all groups of pupils. Pupils enter the school with well below average attainment and leave having attained broadly satisfactory standards. The school's tracking data, observations of lessons and pupils' work confirms that achievement is improving in every key stage. There is good involvement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in creative learning. Levels of enjoyment and learners' self-confidence are all improving as a result of involvement in more creative activity. Pupils are more willing to make mistakes and regard this as a learning opportunity. Attendance has steadily risen and is above the

national average. There was also evidence to suggest that pupils' aspirations have been raised. This was as a direct result of pupils' success in working alongside professionals to produce high quality outcomes.

#### Quality of teaching and learning in relation to the survey's aspect

Creative responses are encouraged through the use of open-ended tasks. In a Key Stage 1 class pupils responded imaginatively to the task of placing words in a hat, with many able to show their understanding of alliteration by choosing words with the same initial sound. The support of teaching assistants was vital in ensuring the full involvement of all pupils. Role play and drama make learning more meaningful for pupils in all year groups. For instance, foundation pupils particularly enjoyed measuring because it related to a tower for Rapunzel. The school consistently uses presentations and homework well to promote creative learning. Pupils are encouraged to select a variety of ways of presenting their ideas, including quite sophisticated use of information and communication technology.

Assessment for learning is very well developed and is contributing significantly to independent and creative learning. Success criteria are used consistently well to involve pupils in self and peer-assessment. Pupils value this as it increases their understanding of what they must do to improve. Creative learning is growing as increasingly pupils are able to identify their own success criteria and take responsibility for achieving their own targets. The school recognises that there is much to be gained from this and is aiming to establish more practice of this kind.

Displays frequently contain questions that encourage deeper thought and reviewing skills are being effectively promoted. However, other higher-order skills that would further promote creativity are not consistently well-developed. The school is aware of this and there are signs of some progress in responding to this relative weakness through professional development aimed at improving questioning. In the most effective lessons success criteria are used to tease out the more challenging outcomes that would often further promote creativity. Increasingly pupils are required to raise questions and share their ideas. Often these become the focus for investigations, particularly in science. There is scope for the greater encouragement of more imaginative hypotheses or speculation influenced by the diverse experience of pupils.

#### Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum promotes creativity outstandingly well. The thematic approach has enthused both staff and pupils. Pupils appreciate the connections that can be made and the more interesting contexts in which they can develop key skills. The school organises many trips, and links to the real world are nearly always made apparent. Key Stage 1 pupils' enjoyment of the lighthouse project was enhanced greatly by a day trip to the seaside. A Key Stage 2 geography project was made more effective by the inclusion of aspects of numeracy. Pupils used traffic surveys and presented data well to support arguments about the possible pedestrianization of the local high street.

Professionals from outside school are used to extend and enrich the curriculum. For instance pupils spoke with great enthusiasm about the opportunity they had to work alongside professional designers when considering plans for the new school. Others valued the opportunity to work with the local secondary school on producing animations of professional standard. The ability to use technical expertise to produce such high quality outcomes is raising aspirations considerably as pupils become more aware of their capabilities.

#### Leadership and management of the aspect

A consistently high quality of teaching is underpinned by the clear vision established by the school, although opportunities to promote the more challenging aspects of creativity are sometimes missed. The successful implementation of curriculum changes has been a major factor in meeting the needs of harder to reach groups. Boys' attitudes to learning have improved considerably. Professional development has been effective in promoting creative learning. The school's current priorities indicate an awareness of relative weaknesses. Monitoring and self-review are used well and evidence from this visit suggests that the school's current self-evaluation is accurate.

The school has been effective in using homework to involve parents more in encouraging greater creativity. The school's approach to planning encourages creativity by making clear the outcomes that are essential while encouraging a great deal of flexibility in how staff and pupils respond to this.

#### Equality and diversity

There is good use of teaching assistants to ensure all pupils have the opportunity to experience creative learning. The needs of harder to reach groups are being met by a more systematic approach to personal, social and health education and a very well adapted curriculum. Very effective use of targets and interventions is ensuring all pupils make at least expected progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing further strategies to take greater account of the varied backgrounds of pupils
- developing creativity further through the identification of additional success criteria that increase the challenge in lessons.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop creativity in the school.

As we 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

Kevin Sheldrick  
Her Majesty's Inspector