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Mrs F Wright  
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Dear Mrs Wright

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 09 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 children, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of children's work and short observations of three 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.

- The children start school aged three with very limited creative and fine motor skills. Provision in the Foundation Stage enables them to successfully develop their creativity over time. They are taught the skills they need to express themselves in art, music, dance, role play and imaginative play through a broad range of activities. Given the children's limited range of life experiences, there is necessarily an intensive level of input from the adults. The adults sensitively support them in expressing the way they feel about their representations

modelling appropriate words and actions. The children are taught new skills effectively but there is less opportunity for them to choose to use these skills. The outdoor play spaces are underused to extend their creative experiences. Overall, the children make good progress towards the early learning goals for creative development.

- By the end of Key Stage 1, as a result of effective, systematic teaching of skills and exposure to a broad range of art and design experiences most pupils reach standards typical for their age. However, their creativity is more limited because in some classes teaching is not yet confident enough to allow children to freely experiment with ideas.
- Their sculpture and other 3D work are well developed because the teaching builds securely on what has gone before and there is less adult direction.
- In Year 2 children's representational drawing and painting shows an increasing sense of proportion and attention to detail.
- There are no obvious differences in the attainment of boys and girls although the school has observed that boys are less inclined to participate in work involving textiles and sewing.
- The high levels of adult support in all classes ensure that children with specific and significant learning or behavioural needs are expertly supported to enable them to take a full and constructive part in lessons. Art and design is often used as a starting point for one to one sessions with vulnerable children because they respond to it so positively.
- The children enjoy the subject but are limited in their use of subject specific language to express their ideas.
- From an early age the children are introduced to the work of a limited range of artists and use their technical skills well to make copies of famous paintings.
- The children are less confident in developing ideas from their imagination, choosing from a range of media or mixing media to develop a personal style.

## Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Lessons are efficiently organised and well resourced.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively. In all lessons seen, pupils' behaviour is good and they use tools and materials carefully.
- The learning environment is visually exciting with art work of all kinds displayed to a good standard. Resources are well organised and accessible to pupils in lessons.
- Teachers' plan pupils' work carefully according to specific objectives taking pupils' varying needs and abilities fully into account. However, planned activities tend to have a particular outcome in mind and as a result, opportunities for pupils to discover, experiment, take risks and develop more autonomy in their learning are limited.
- The school's chosen scheme of work ensures that pupils learn all that they should.

- Generally, activities tend to be directed rather than the teacher adopting a role of observation and intervention to support individual pupils' progress.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features.

- The curriculum enables teachers and learners to meet the objectives of the Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum.
- Children are given a range of opportunities to use computer software to explore colour and pattern.
- Arts Week is a whole school event much enjoyed by staff, parents and pupils alike. It successfully brings the community together. In particular, it attracts more help from parents than any other event during the school year. This event provides a level of choice, experimentation and creativity that is not always replicated in lessons.
- The staff are extremely astute in adapting and personalising learning to meet the needs of individuals so ensure that all groups of pupils enjoy success.
- Developing a more creative curriculum has been a priority in the school's strategic planning for two years and meaningful links between subjects are developing as a result. Themed weeks have proved successful and provide many opportunities for children to use their art and design skills in other subjects.
- The school has developed excellent transition units to support children as they move from class to class. As the children move to a new class, or a new school in the case of Year 2, they take their work with them and complete the unit with their next teacher. This provides them with security and familiarity as they adapt to a new setting.

## Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management in art and design are good.

- The subject leader has a flair for the subject and a passion for teaching it. She leads by example as seen in the richness of display in her teaching area and her enthusiasm is infectious.
- Careful consideration is given to the units of work for each age group. These are evaluated and if they fail generate sufficient enthusiasm by either teachers or learners, they are substituted.
- Monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching is systematic and informs the action plan for the subject's future development. The actions relate directly to the school's aims. However, the criteria for success are not always successfully linked to outcomes for learners. Opportunities to directly observe the quality of teaching are limited.
- Links with the nearby junior school are very well developed. For example, the gallery in the main hall exhibits work from junior aged pupils to give younger children a standard to aspire to.
- Resources to support teachers in their planning are helpful and accessible but professional training to improve their knowledge, skills

and understanding and give them more confidence in encouraging experimental activities has been limited.

- A governor takes a keen interest in the subject and organises art competitions that the children enjoy taking part in. Prizes include sets of artists' materials and tools to encourage children to pursue creative activities at home.

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

This is satisfactory.

- In the Foundation Stage assessment is used effectively to inform daily planning so that children's learning builds on what they know and can do.
- Teachers assess attainment regularly using examples of work in their sketchbooks as the main source of evidence. These become progress records for individual children.
- Children's performance in each unit of the scheme of work is evaluated to highlight their achievement in relation to expectations.
- Explicitness of assessment criteria is less advanced and not yet fully embedded in assessment practice.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- achieve greater balance between teachers' objective led planning and pupils' creativity
- strengthen teachers' confidence in encouraging children to take risks, think divergently and respond to the unexpected
- develop outdoor play spaces to foster children's creative development.

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