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Mrs H Priest  
Headteacher  
The Grove Primary School  
The Grove  
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TQ95E

Dear Mrs Priest

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Creative Learning

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 15 September 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 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 you, with several teachers and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons.

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

Achievement and standards and personal development

Achievement is good across the school and by the end of Year 6 nearly all pupils achieve well, having made overall good progress in academic subjects and in personal and social development. Standards are broadly average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6 with higher than expected numbers reaching the higher Levels 3 and 5 in English, mathematics and science. Girls achieve a little better than boys by Year 2 but boys and girls achieve more equally by Year 6. Upward trends that as yet unvalidated evidence suggests have continued in 2008 can be linked directly to more effective promotion of creative learning as well as to imaginative and exciting teaching.

Pupils produce high quality work, especially that which stems from investigations in class or from following their own specific interests. Pupils of all ages spoke passionately about their love of project work, which they regularly undertake independently or in pairs, and there is no doubt that the well established cross-curricular approach to learning is paying dividends. Pupils are exceptionally happy and settled in school and are often highly motivated and engaged. The Grove's impressive upward turn of results was not due to teachers 'teaching to the tests' but to the school's focus on the personal development of each child and its approach to creativity in learning.

The school is doing consistently well in supporting creative modes of learning for the vast majority of pupils and where occasionally gaps in learning have led to a few pupils underachieving, senior staff put plans in place to enable all to catch up. Staff know that the challenge for them lies in supporting all pupils to do as well as the more able and in achieving greater consistency in teaching and learning so that rates of progress are more even. There is no formal assessment of the development of individual pupils' creative learning skills but good systems are in place to help monitor and assess the quality of what goes on in the school. Records seen were impressive and work, for example, is very well organised and presented.

#### Quality of teaching and learning in relation to the survey

Positive features of creative learning were seen in lessons when teachers really listened to pupils and responded to their views in such a way that the children knew their ideas were valued. Staff often had the knack of not only asking the right question in the right way at the right moment but moved understanding on well because of the response they then gave. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to think for themselves, work in small groups, reflect on their work, learn from their mistakes and challenge themselves. They use information and communication technology (ICT) and role play to present ideas in different ways. The incentive for teachers themselves also to think creatively is enhancing pupils' achievement. This is not, however, fully consistent across the school.

Pupils achieve well when they are encouraged to ask questions, questions and more questions! The strong focus on communication in lessons as well as on developing speaking and listening in planning contributes to the good standards achieved. Assessment is very detailed and staff know their pupils very well. In addition, the school's overview of the big picture of teaching, learning and assessment is very thorough and information is well used to promote creative modes of learning.

#### Quality of the curriculum

The adapted curriculum is constantly reviewed and purposefully managed. It challenges children's thinking effectively and provides them with a very varied range of activities including at the end of the school day. As one member of staff said, 'In Reception we try and bring the outside world in whereas further up the school we take learning outside of the classroom as much as possible.'

Solving problems is central to many lessons and activities. As a result pupils develop open and enquiring minds and by the age of eleven they are very self aware, confident and mature. Resources, for example computers and worksheets, are very well used to record work across the curriculum and show where creativity is being developed well.

### Leadership and management of the aspect

Under your new leadership morale is high and staff speak very positively about a strengthened shared vision where the views of children 'are top of the list'. Many good features are recognised within the wider community, including the approach to creative learning, and there are waiting lists in most year groups.

Staff are keen to continue investing time and resources into creative learning; they are committed to it and can see standards rising in many areas. A positive impact is the benefit in the personal development and well being of pupils, who shared with me their love of learning and their enjoyment of school. Developing creativity is not something which has been looked at recently and with new staff in the school senior leaders agree that an open debate would be worthwhile.

The upward trends, for example in science, without doubt stem from the excellent lead from subject managers who plan and deliver a wonderful range of play based, practical hands on activities for all learners. The new school improvement plan has a clear and constructive focus on developing further a skills based curriculum.

### Equality and diversity

The school promotes equality and diversity very well. All pupils are kindly and respectfully treated and themselves demonstrate very positive moral values. Pupils have many and equal opportunities to succeed and parents value the commitment evident in this area.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- reviewing the teaching and learning policy to fully reflect what it means to be a creative learner
- developing ways of promoting and monitoring creativity more consistently.

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

Charlotte Roberson  
Additional Inspector