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Mrs K Bennett
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bennett

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Creative Learning

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 18 September 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons, an upper school singing session and a range of different activities in the afternoon lessons.

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

Achievement and standards and personal development

The creative approach that the school takes to learning is now having a positive impact on standards at the end of Year 6. The 2008 national test results show that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 increased in all subjects, with thirteen per cent more pupils reaching this level in mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 is now close to average. In English and mathematics there was also an increase in the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5.

Pupils progressed particularly well in lessons where teachers set exciting and relevant challenges, such as deciding whether a real life family should go on holiday to Devon or Spain depending on their different needs and the budgetary considerations. They confidently tackled problems and made and justified decisions. Teachers value each pupil's contribution and this gives pupils confidence to express their personal opinions. The links that teachers make across learning in different subjects reinforce key skills very effectively.

In lessons there is a strong emphasis on pupils working in pairs or groups, both for a quick discussion about some key learning and for longer periods when they have to work together for a particular outcome. This results in pupils being extremely confident in talking about their learning, making decisions and listening to other points of view. They have a very good understanding of how to improve their academic development. This is a result of detailed marking of work, with an on-going written dialogue between the teacher and the pupil. It is also a result of the school's systems for involving pupils in assessing both their own and each other's work. The school is beginning to extend pupils' skills of evaluation by using individuals as observers when group tasks are being carried out and it is in a good position to extend this through the school. Pupils are very keen to take the initiative and pursue their responsibilities with great enthusiasm. For example, the angels and champions of reading are very proud of the impact their reading challenge is having on the whole school. Pupils across all year groups agree that 'Learning here is fun.'

Quality of teaching and learning of creative learning

All of the teaching observed was at least good and some was outstanding. A key strength of the teaching and learning is the range and quality of questioning by teachers. In the great majority of lessons, pupils are given time to consider their responses with talking partners, which reinforces their learning well. In the best lessons teachers use a sequence of contrasting learning activities to extend pupils' first hand experiences and to consider different ways of thinking. For example, in an English lesson pupils became the conscience of a key character and individuals experienced the dilemma of conflicting advice. The school ensures that vulnerable pupils receive specific and sensitive guidance in lessons, which ensures that they take a full part in the all the different ways of learning.

Quality of the curriculum

The school provides an outstanding curriculum, based firmly on systematically developing basic skills within a creative learning framework. The planning systems, which identify meaningful cross-curricular links, ensure that pupils make connections across different subjects, such as interpreting a poem they had written as a basis for a dance sequence. There is a strong emphasis on offering real life opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking and strengthen personal development. The school extends the new primary framework imaginatively The 'Grow Your Own' project encourages families to support their children confidently to achieve both academically and personally. Pupils appreciate the range of after school clubs, particularly the

choir and the musical productions. Curriculum opportunities for gifted and talented pupils are imaginative, giving these pupils a chance to hold their own in contrasting locations, learning to co-operate with pupils from other schools.

Leadership and management of creative learning

Leadership and management are good. The whole staff is committed to providing effective creative learning for pupils. You create efficient systems to ensure that the school continues to build a creative context for pupils' learning, to allow them to leave school with the life skills and ambitions they need to be successful. There is a clear focus on identifying the impact of personal development on academic achievement. The school is now in a good position to extend these systems with a stronger emphasis on assessing the personal skills they are nurturing. Self-evaluation includes a clear focus on the strengths and development issues related to creative learning and are based on thorough monitoring. These strategies in turn feed smoothly into staff development programmes.

Equality and diversity

The school sets a high priority on including every pupil in the wide range of activities it offers both within the school day and in the after school clubs. The programme of dinnertime provision for vulnerable pupils includes imaginative opportunities for them to take the initiative, such as inviting the mayor in to visit them. The work of the inclusion team considers carefully how to support vulnerable pupils within lessons. It is very successful in ensuring that their needs are met and that they take a full part in developing skills such as decision making or tackling problems.

Areas for improvement for extending assessment of creative learning, which we discussed, included:

- involving pupils more in evaluating both their own and each other's personal development
- developing the school's systems for analysing the impact of personal development on academic achievement
- increasing the focus on the monitoring of teaching to include the quality of creative learning.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop creative learning 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

Maggi Shepherd
Additional Inspector