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Ms E Simpson
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Simpson

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Creative Learning

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 02 October 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, observation of four lessons plus six short observations of lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good through the school and the national tests show that standards are rising. Creative learning strategies are supporting pupils well in developing basic skills and in helping them to remember previous learning. Pupils find this particularly effective in mathematics, for example, in the use of songs to support an understanding of the place value within numbers. At the end of Key Stage 1 in 2008 more pupils reached the expected level in the national tests than the previous year. A considerably larger proportion of pupils reached higher than expected levels in reading and mathematics. The school has been working hard to provide imaginative and purposeful activities in English to improve pupils' literacy skills. A much higher proportion of pupils

reached the expected level in national tests in 2008 in Year 6 in this subject. The strong emphasis on supporting individuals to learn in the way that suits them best makes sure that pupils of all abilities make good progress.

Children make an excellent start in their personal development in the Nursery. There is a strong emphasis on supporting children in understanding the importance of sharing with each other and in carrying out the school routines. Even at this early stage in the term they move between activities sensibly and respond very well to instructions. Pupils continue to develop confidence as they move through the school and they respond very sensibly to the wide range of exciting challenges that the school provides. They are keen to take responsibility and are proud of their achievements. The school is in the early stages of supporting pupils in assessing the effectiveness of their own learning. Pupils are enthusiastic about the creative learning strategies in place, such as the use of mind mapping to organise their thoughts. The school provides plenty of opportunities for pupils to make decisions and they do this confidently. For example, they took part in a local project called 'You Decide', designed a new playground area, argued their case in front of other pupils and councillors, won a grant and then followed the work through to completion. Pupils know what they have to do to improve academically but are less sure about their development of personal skills or how well they have been learning over a unit of work. Pupils have an excellent understanding of keeping healthy through the high quality project of Wobbly Street, which is based on key principles of healthy living.

Quality of teaching and learning of creative learning

The quality of all of the teaching and learning observed was good with some outstanding features. Teachers have a good understanding of pupils' individual approaches to learning and provide a very good balance of different activities in lessons to match these. There is a strong emphasis on practical learning as a basis for developing basic skills. For example, a group of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made healthy fruit kebabs and wrote instructions on how to make them for other pupils to follow. Teachers provide exciting and challenging activities during lessons but their organisation of the work that pupils produce does not allow pupils to reflect on their learning over time. Pupils learn very effectively when they use individual whiteboards; they appreciate that they can learn from making mistakes, which can then be corrected easily. Staff use interactive whiteboards creatively to present visual images to reinforce learning. There are many opportunities for pupils to work in pairs or groups to solve problems or to share their ideas. The school is trialling assessment of children's personal development in the Nursery.

Quality of the curriculum

The school provides a good quality creative curriculum, with some very imaginative projects. The 'Wobbly Street' initiative to produce materials based on characters that have problems with keeping healthy is very effective. It provides very good opportunities to create links across different subjects and pupils thoroughly enjoy carrying out work based on the different characters.

There are imaginative whole week projects, such as the Arts weeks, where specialists from the community provide additional expertise to extend pupils' learning. The school is reorganising its curriculum to create purposeful links across different subjects, whilst developing skills that build systematically through the school. This initiative is working well and pupils enjoy opportunities to carry out tasks with clear purpose, such as considering key features and emotions of key leaders of Greek mythology. The initiative is in its early stages and the school has not had time to evaluate its effectiveness or plan the spring and summer terms in detail. Visits out of school provide very effective opportunities for creative learning.

Leadership and management of creative learning

You have a very clear and effectively communicated vision of the importance of creative learning. There is a clear commitment to provide good quality staff training to extend individuals' expertise. The school makes good use of the local community and works hard to involve parents in its work. Monitoring of creative learning ensures that changes are implemented successfully and that all staff are fully involved. Leaders work well within the partnerships available from the local authority to extend the range of expertise in the school.

Equality and diversity

The creative curriculum ensures that all pupils make good progress. Involving every pupil in visits out of school provides every one with the experiences to build their future learning in school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because of the emphasis on learning through practical and meaningful experiences. Whole class music sessions promote equality well, particularly in Year 5. All pupils develop confidence.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- evaluating and developing the effectiveness of this term's newly organised curriculum and planning the next two terms in greater detail
- organising the outcomes of pupils' work more efficiently to reflect more closely the good quality learning going on in lessons and allowing pupils to assess their own learning in more detail.

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