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Mrs K Forster
Headteacher
Redlands Primary School
Lydford Road
Reading
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Dear Mrs Forster

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Creative Learning

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 06 October 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 and your staff and two groups of 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 outstanding.

Achievement and standards and personal development

Academic achievement and standards across the curriculum are consistently good with results of assessments at the end of Year 6 being above those expected in similar schools and nationally. In 2008 provisional results of formal tests have risen in the numbers reaching higher levels with writing assessments also improving; nonetheless the school remains focused on improving writing still further.

The diverse nature of pupils at Redlands helps all children gain many personal skills and values - for example, empathy, respect and tolerance - which support aspects of creative learning so well. You capitalise on the interests and knowledge of individuals very well and so enable pupils to see

relationships, make connections, and think about things in different ways. Over time they develop into mature, open minded and very respectful children who are independent thinkers and creative learners. They reported that they love using their brains in different ways, finding out new and surprising things, that Drama is helping them “feel things more” and that school “helps me grow as a person”. Personal development is outstanding.

Assessment of academic subjects is clearly a strength and data well used to support next steps for teachers and learners. But you say that “data crunching is not seen to be the be all and end all”. Assessment of personal development, both informal and formal is also well established; the systems are manageable, well demonstrating where progress is being made. The challenge lies in refining this good system to look even more closely at creativity for individuals so that already high standards can be built on.

Quality of teaching and learning in relation to the survey

Teaching supports creative learning very well. Behaviour and relationships across the school are outstanding and from a young age children are very keen and interested to learn. When appointing new teachers careful consideration is given to teaching styles and so teaching is consistently good in the way, for example, it encourages pupils to think for themselves and not be worried about an answer being wrong. All adults “help us all feel special” reported one child. This consistency of approach impacts well on learning and in all classes pupils were on task and enjoying themselves. Great excitement bubbled up when in small groups pupils had to think how best to solve a problem for a family in Victorian times at risk of eviction. Collaboration was excellent. Intelligent questions were thought up and discussion lively and thoughtful.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum, both for personal, social, health and citizenship education and for religious education, underpins much of what the school achieves and is central to your many successes. Delivery of the curriculum has moved away from following formal schemes and policies to a topic approach, which is much enjoyed, and links between subjects are very evident. Topics often start with introductions on what the children are going to learn but the children in turn are asked what they would like to learn, which encourages creative thinking.

The excellent curriculum succeeds because it equips pupils with the skills to question and challenge and to make informed choices. It is very broad and promotes a love of learning from a young age. The impact of a more creative curriculum is not just reflected in core subjects but permeates all areas as pupils become more questioning and more self directed. It is not just the end of key stage results that reflect the impact of creative modes of learning. Pupils of all ages really enjoy school and show this in a variety of ways. One young boy was very secure in knowing that it's fine to make mistakes as long as “you have a go”.

Leadership and management

Leaders fully embrace the multicultural and very diverse nature of your school, where nearly thirty languages are spoken and you have developed a stimulating environment that celebrates and respects many differences in a variety of ways. Pupils can arrive and depart unexpectedly, which has its own challenges, but you manage this very well. The school has already done a lot of work to promote creative learning and further development to raise attainment across the curriculum is a priority in your school development plan. Many policies reflect creativity and your own monitoring and self-evaluation, including that of creative learning, give an exceptionally secure picture of a school that knows where it is heading.

Staff are fully and successfully committed to promoting personal development, enabling pupils to become independent thinkers and creative learners who are very confident when it comes to moving onto the next stage in their education. The shared vision amongst your staff and confidence in how best to promote creative learning are very evident. However, what makes leadership and management of this aspect of the school outstanding is that between you all you demonstrate many imaginative ways to move the school further, are open to new ideas and ways of doing things and, to this end, constantly seek the views of the children. In addition, 'Every Child Matters' values are embedded in policy and practice and you always seek professional development relevant to all priorities in your goal of all round excellence.

Equality and diversity

This is a fully inclusive and cohesive community where pupils know they are treated equally and with much respect, affection and kindness. Pupils learn to speak English very quickly because they are so well supported. Pupils and staff said they really appreciate and value being part of such a lively multicultural school and would not wish to be anywhere else.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to review and develop the school's current systems for assessment so that creative learning can be further promoted.

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

