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Mrs N Lamond
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Dear Mrs Lamond

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 16 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of six part-lessons and your draft Self-Evaluation Form.

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

Achievement and standards

The impact of creative modes of learning on achievement and personal development is satisfactory. High standards were observed in dance. The dance provision has increased levels of enjoyment and has raised the confidence levels, particularly of some lower achieving boys.

By the time pupils sit the tests in Year 6 standards in English are in line with the national average. Progress is less in mathematics largely because key skills are not reinforced through other subjects in the curriculum. In contrast, creative ways of learning are used to promote literacy, resulting in better

achievement in English. Although satisfactory, achievement is currently inconsistent across the school. Recent, more effective behaviour management and an increase in the amount of enjoyable and creative activity have improved behaviour so that it is now satisfactory.

Quality of teaching and learning

The contribution of teaching to the development of creativity in learning is satisfactory. Several examples of creative learning were seen during the visit. Pupils enjoyed the activity of designing a time machine so they could travel back to meet the Egyptians. More confident teachers promote creativity well because they ensure it is also challenging. Dance is very effectively promoting creativity because of the teacher's ability to ensure pupils work imaginatively and think critically about performances. However, quite a number of year groups are led by inexperienced or less confident teachers who do not always make the most of enjoyable activities, so the potential to contribute to the development of creative learners is not fully realised. Sometimes questions are limited to factual recall and teaching assistants are not used to support pupils in reflecting more deeply about their experiences.

Marking often provides useful critical feedback but independent learning is limited by a lack of explicit criteria by which pupils can evaluate progress and share in taking responsibility for reaching the next level. Pupils appreciate the rewards they receive, and the applause given, especially when care is taken to ensure they know exactly why they have been successful. Teachers use information and communication technology confidently and are beginning use this to promote creativity.

Quality of the curriculum

The contribution of the curriculum to the development of creativity in learning is satisfactory. A themed approach is established throughout the school. This has improved levels of enjoyment and encouraged greater creativity in both teachers and pupils. It has raised standards in English by providing important opportunities to reinforce literacy skills, through work in the subjects pupils really enjoy. However, this approach has not been used to reinforce key mathematical skills and this is a major factor in the lower standards in this subject. Displays around the school reflect this bias.

The Foundation Stage, outdoor play area is used effectively. Pupils' engagement with topic work is usually high because of the links with interesting contexts. Pupils were strongly of the view that more visits would greatly enhance their learning. Links beyond school, including to the after school club, are a major factor in the tremendous success of dance in the school.

Leadership and management

The impact of leadership and management in fostering creativity in learning is satisfactory. Senior leaders are clear about the role of creativity in promoting enjoyment and achievement. Significant inconsistencies suggest some

weaknesses in the extent to which there is a shared vision across the school. There have been reasonable attempts to involve the community through the dance initiative and the newly organised pupil council. There is limited evidence of the target-setting process being used to build links with parents or to promote independent learning.

The monitoring of teaching and learning is largely accurate and there is an honest appraisal of this in the school's self-evaluation. Behaviour has been improved significantly from a situation in which it was a concern, with some pupils feeling unsafe. As a result more teachers are prepared to promote creative ways of learning. Teaching assistants are not consistently used well in classrooms.

Equality and diversity

All groups of pupils achieve satisfactorily. The school has a good record of targeting any under-achievement at an early stage. The dance initiative has had a positive effect on those pupils involved, including boys at risk of under-achieving.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring activities aimed at increasing creativity also make pupils reflect critically on their experiences
- reinforcement of key mathematical skills through themed work involving creativity in other subjects
- improve the management of teaching assistants.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop creativity 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

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector