

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs D Buckle
Headteacher
Framwellgate Moor Primary School
Newton Drive
Framwellgate Moor
Durham City
County Durham
DH1 5GB

Dear Mrs Buckle

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, learners and an external support worker, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons, a range of different activities in the afternoon lessons.

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

Achievement and standards and personal development

The school's priority of ensuring that pupils learn through creative opportunities results in outstanding achievement. The strong focus on developing the four key skills of observing, communicating, comparing and questioning that runs through the school provides pupils with consistent opportunities to develop these skills across all their learning. Children enter the school at a lower level than expected for their age. They settle quickly into school routines and become very confident in choosing activities from a

wide range of creative tasks. The school has ensured that this is followed through in Key Stage 1, where teachers make sure that the practical basis for learning established in the Foundation Stage is continued. The organisation of these classrooms requires pupils to make choices about their learning and to work together to carry out tasks, which they do very well. In Key Stage 2 teachers continue to provide stimulating and imaginative learning opportunities and by the end of Year 6 standards are significantly above average. The school has just completed a clear assessment system to identify pupils' progress right through the school that will be implemented this year.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy their learning and appreciate the opportunities to work out problems for themselves. They use information and communication technology (ICT) very confidently because the school provides handheld computers across different lessons. For example, Year 2 pupils accessed the internet to find out more about their work on houses. Pupils develop sensitivity to their own and each other's feelings through the drama and emotional literacy projects.

Quality of teaching and learning of creative learning

Teaching methods give outstanding support to creative learning. Teachers focus on key questions in each lesson and always refer to the basic skills that run across subjects. A team-based approach to lesson planning encourages the sharing of ideas to stimulate pupils' interests. Teachers work very successfully with the teaching assistants. Staff have a very good understanding of each pupil's levels of development and use well focused questions to challenge and support. The marking of written work is consistently good. In the best examples, teachers create opportunities for pupils to respond to comments and create a productive dialogue.

Quality of the curriculum

The creative curriculum is outstanding. The use of themes throughout the school works extremely well, particularly as they are based on the four key skills. This allows pupils to make connections across different subjects and to approach learning in a wide variety of ways. The school provides a broad range of opportunities to learn outside the classroom. There are effective links with international schools, including international visits. The school responds well to pupils' suggestions about the organisation of the curriculum. This is particularly effective in physical education, where pupils work across different age groups for a full afternoon and move around a carousel of activities. The ICT curriculum is very effective, combining specific computer skills learnt in the computer suite alongside their use of handheld devices in classrooms across the curriculum.

Leadership and management of creative learning

Leadership and management are outstanding. You have an extremely clear vision of the importance of creative learning. Senior and middle managers endorse this and are keen to extend this aspect of the school's work through their own areas of responsibility. There is a very effective system of

professional development that ensures that staff develop skills that contribute towards providing high quality creative learning. Monitoring is very thorough and leads to accurate self-evaluation. The school makes strong partnerships with schools and other agencies in the locality. It is keen to extend links with hard to reach families.

Equality and diversity

The emphasis on providing practical opportunities for learning supports pupils with English as an additional language. The emphasis on creative learning allows pupils with less confidence in academic skills to excel in other areas.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- implementing and evaluating the new assessment system for tracking progress of the key skills of creative learning
- further extending pupils' understanding of their own learning in their written work through providing opportunities for pupils to respond to teachers' comments.

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