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Mrs I Falconer
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Falconer

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 10 November 2008 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 several key members of staff, a discussion with pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, observation of two lessons and also a brief observation of every class during the afternoon with you.

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

Achievement and standards and personal development

Trends in your school are for rising standards and achievements year on year in nearly every area. Pupils come from diverse backgrounds and many start with very little spoken English. Very good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage promotes creative learning successfully because it enables children to make sense of the world around them and gives them confidence to learn through play. A morning of activities looking at symmetry was excellently planned and delivered and no opportunity was missed to promote each child's understanding in all six areas of learning. Many pupils in Years 1 and 2 spoke very sensibly about how they learn best and what they enjoy

most and it is no surprise to report that whenever their learning is rooted in practical, 'hands on' investigations, problem solving activities or visits, or when time is given to a specific topic then this is when pupils excel and standards are high. There is evidence that girls do better than boys but actions are being delivered which are closing the gap.

Staff know all pupils extremely well and children who are vulnerable are particularly well supported and achieve strongly. Assessment of progress in all core subjects is effective. Assessments of creativity feed into the picture of every child and your involvement in a pilot scheme for assessing personal development this term should give a little more detail. The pupil voice is very strong in the school; much valuable information is gained and then acted upon.

Quality of teaching and learning in relation to the survey

Teaching is good overall. Some is outstanding. Excellent use of resources, including computers, successfully promotes creative thinking. Good questioning and helpful hints from staff challenge and encourage pupils to think for themselves although there is scope for teachers to expect more involvement from the small minority who appeared a little passive in a few lessons. Pupils are very secure in knowing that making mistakes is part of the learning process. They say their teachers often tell them to "take a risk" with their work and really "go for it!" They would like even more problems to solve and more challenges. Pupils also said they appreciate being given time to reflect on their work. Enjoyment levels are very high and all aspects of the Every Child Matters agenda are very well supported. Pupils spoke of going into London on the tube when "We were taught the important things like how to behave safely and make sure we offer our seats to older people or anyone with disabilities," and in this way they are encouraged to think about the consequences of their actions.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum ensures that requirements for content and skills are well covered and a richness and breadth are well established. Staff are fully committed to adapting the curriculum even more to build on changes made recently to the way in which subjects are taught and the way the curriculum itself is planned. Opportunities to develop links between subjects are beginning to have a positive impact on creative learning and importantly time has been allocated to allow staff themselves to be more creative. When topics, for example *Romeo and Juliet*, or Materials in science week, are given chunks of time then everyone talks with a lot of enthusiasm about the satisfaction and benefits to be gained.

Leadership and management of the aspect

The school is very well placed to promote creative learning even further because of your enthusiastic staff and the energetic style of leadership at every level. Children's best interests are at the heart of your many achievements, not least the continued encouragement being given to promoting self-esteem, confidence, enjoyment and well-being. Provision is

exceptionally carefully monitored and there is no doubt that senior leaders have a very firm understanding of data, but it is what you do with this analysis that is driving school improvement strongly. This includes creative learning. In addition, all members of the community are valued and involved and a shared understanding of the importance of listening to everyone is evident when you plan and think about the next steps for your school in promoting creativity further. Continued professional development at all levels has been and is key to your successes.

Equality and diversity

A clear commitment to equality and diversity both within your school and the community it serves is very evident. Because your analysis of the impact of provision for all learners is so sharp, timely changes are then made which allow pupils to catch up and achieve equally well over time.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the use of innovation and creativity in the curriculum by encouraging subject leaders to focus on making more links between subjects
- developing more practical and problem solving activities for pupils.

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