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Mrs C Paine
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Paine

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 24 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 staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of parts of seven lessons and other activities.

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

Achievement and standards and personal development

The school has a quite exceptional commitment to the development of creativity as a tool to support the best possible learning and, after a period of research, speciality weeks and pilot projects, has put into place a two-year cycle of 'Creative Themes for Learning'. Rigorous monitoring throughout the development stages of this process shows rising standards, improved confidence and high self-esteem to be closely linked to the use of cross-curricular themes, in which children develop their own ideas in a safe and supportive environment. Overall, achievement and standards are now significantly higher than at the time of the last inspection and are excellent overall. Personal development is outstanding, as a result of the opportunities

which pupils grab enthusiastically to work together, to be creative, to explore links between different aspects of what they do, and to celebrate one another's achievements.

Quality of teaching and learning in relation to the survey

During the visit, no teaching was judged to be less than good, and two lessons were outstanding, including the work in the nursery. Discussion and exploration of children's ideas and creativity are a feature of nearly all teaching, and as a result children make connections well, learning to reflect constructively on their experiences, even when they are unexpected. In every classroom visited, a buzz of purposeful activity showed that children understood what they were to do, were fully engaged with the task, and were enjoying their learning. However, the curriculum is very new to both teachers and pupils, and it sometimes happened that minor misjudgements, for example in timing, made the quality of learning less than outstanding, and teaching and learning in relation to creative learning was good overall. Both assessment and the imaginative use of information and communication technology are excellent.

Quality of the curriculum

An outstanding new curriculum, based around cross-curricular themes, is at the heart of the school's current drive to raise standards. Themed projects, closely linked to the National Curriculum, present children with opportunities to discuss, to evaluate, and to create. Opportunities to celebrate achievement are built into day-to-day planning, and help children to gain in confidence as they express their ideas, working with their peers to produce the best possible work. Enjoyment and enthusiasm are key. A good range of clubs further enhances the curriculum, and pupils' enjoyment of school.

Leadership and management of the aspect

You provide outstanding and dynamic leadership which results in a unity of purpose amongst the staff that is quite exceptional. Your work on the new curriculum at national level, the use you have made of external consultants, and the research projects and pilot studies that you have initiated give a confidence and integrity to the work that has communicated to children and parents alike. Your positive encouragement of creative ways of learning contributes significantly to children's achievement. Sharp evaluation of the detailed planning that has been undertaken by middle managers, monitoring of children's progress, and comparisons with national data all give a tight focus to teaching that further improves the quality of learning.

Equality and diversity

Every child does indeed matter in this school community, and the curriculum and teaching provide a secure environment for children from diverse backgrounds, including the very able, those with English as an additional language, and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Personalised support for every individual ensures that no groups are disadvantaged.

Areas for improvement

There are no specific areas for improvement that have not already been identified by the school.

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

David Lewis
Additional Inspector