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Mrs M Burdsey
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Dear Mrs Burdsey

Ofsted survey inspection programme – art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 September 2008 to look at work in art and design.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the quality of assessment in the subject and its impact on pupils' progress. 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 a sample of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of art and design was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- From below average attainment on joining the school, the pupils make good progress and reach average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Work in the subject contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of learning and through it they make good gains in confidence and self-esteem.
- The pupils develop satisfactory skills in controlling materials and processes and in using visual elements such as tone or colour to depict what they see and imagine from different sources including memory.
- The pupils' language skills, a weakness on entry to school, develop well through discussion in lessons, although some still struggle to use a wide enough vocabulary when talking about what they are doing.

- Regular reference to the work of other creative practitioners ensures that the pupils make good progress in understanding how the work of others can support the development of their own work.
- The outcomes for projects become increasingly diverse as the pupils move up through the school. While they do not always have the skills to communicate ideas clearly they work hard to develop individual responses to projects and make work which is personally meaningful.

Quality of teaching and learning in art and design

Teaching and learning in art and design are good.

- Lessons are engaging and well managed occasions which include a variety of tasks to help sustain pupils' attention.
- The teachers and other adults work well together to provide support for those who find it difficult to behave well and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so they make good progress.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge through working as year teams and with the subject leader to develop their teaching and share ideas.
- Lessons are well planned so that activities link over time for each class. However in some lessons too little consideration is given to how activities might be varied to ensure pupils reach their individual targets.
- Good enrichment of teaching takes place through the regular projects undertaken with creative practitioners. These have a beneficial long term impact on teachers' subject knowledge and confidence.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in art and design is good.

- Strong emphasis is rightly placed on broadening pupils' experiences and giving them lots of opportunities to develop basic literacy skills alongside social skills such as teamwork through art and design.
- The curriculum ensures good experience of working on different scales, focusing on a range of genre and using varied starting points. Pupils experience a good balance of art, craft and design activities and this contributes well to their enjoyment of the subject.
- A cross-curricular approach to planning is effective because the links made between subjects reinforce learning. However it is not always clear enough in schemes of work how subject activities are adapted to ensure pupils of different attainment levels are supported.
- A good range of visits, artists in residence and after school clubs enrich pupils' experiences and ensure that the curriculum has features unique to the school's location and to local creative practice. These activities, alongside exhibitions of pupils' work in the area, enable them to contribute well to the local community.

Leadership and management of art and design

The leadership and management of art and design are good.

- The subject leader has good subject knowledge and is passionate about the subject. She takes every opportunity to enhance pupils' opportunities through accessing local arts initiatives and organisations.
- Staff development is well planned to meet subject needs through the sharing of best practice in school and exploiting external training.
- Subject monitoring has strengths in the scrutiny of work and through informal discussion between the subject leader and her colleagues. The outcomes have been used effectively to strengthen provision over time. However too little use is made of lesson observation and analysis of assessment information to bolster the monitoring of provision.
- Subject development priorities are appropriate. They link particularly well to overall areas for school development such as building pupils' ability to be reflective learners, although some success criteria are not measurable enough in relation to the intended outcomes for pupils.

Subject issue: the quality of assessment and its impact on pupils' progress and creativity is judged to be good.

- Lessons contain good assessment opportunities for pupils including peer, self and group assessment. Teachers manage these well and encourage pupils to take creative risks and celebrate the development of individual responses. Nevertheless many pupils continue to lack confidence in thinking independently about their work.
- Teachers give good individual support and guidance to pupils in lessons through one-to-one discussion based on good awareness of each pupil's subject and personal development.
- Tracking pupils' progress over time has strengths in the Foundation Stage. For older pupils work-books for each project are used well to store evidence of achievement and trigger intervention if there are concerns that it is too slow. However, for these pupils too little use is made of formal assessment of progress toward targets to ensure good achievement and to help plan teaching to meet individual needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- make more use of formal assessment to monitor pupils' achievement over time and to support lesson planning so that opportunities are systematically provided for pupils to meet their long term targets
- enhance subject monitoring by including observations of subject teaching and through systematic reference to assessment information
- check the impact of initiatives to improve subject provision by ensuring that they make a measurable difference to pupils.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop art and design 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

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector