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06 October 2008

Mr J Clements
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Dear Mr Clements

Ofsted survey inspection programme – art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 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 how effectively connections to the work of other artists, craftworkers and designers promote the pupils' creativity.

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 short observations of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of art and design was judged to be satisfactory with some good features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- On entry, children's creative skills generally meet expectations for their age. Thorough assessment identifies their strengths and weaknesses and informs curriculum planning. This ensures that their creativity develops well during the Reception year. A good range of creative activities are on offer inside the classroom and outdoors. These enable the children to use their imagination through role play and make-believe and to explore new materials, media and processes. However,

the activities do not always offer enough scope for children to incorporate their own ideas and be adventurous.

- Through Key Stages 1 and 2, a good scheme of work supports curriculum planning ensuring that pupils' skills develop systematically and that they learn to carefully manipulate a broad range of materials, media and tools. Most pupils make the expected progress in the subject and reach targets typical of their age, ability and context and some exceed them. Nonetheless, their creativity lags behind the skills development because there are not enough opportunities for pupils to experiment, mix media or create original art work.
- Pupils develop good knowledge and understanding of male artists, designers and craftspeople from different cultures and countries. However, there is an imbalance in their exposure to and recollection of contemporary female equivalents.
- From Year 3 pupils use sketchbooks proficiently to collect a personal repertoire of ideas, feelings and thoughts.
- Girls and boys say that they enjoy the subject and work with sustained interest and enthusiasm in lessons.

Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Lessons are efficiently organised and well resourced. The school's chosen scheme of work ensures that pupils learn all that they should.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively. In all lessons seen, pupils' behaviour was good and they used tools and materials carefully. Generally, activities tend to be directed rather than the teacher adopting a role of observation and intervention to support individual pupils' progress.
- Teachers plan pupils' work carefully according to specific objectives. They confidently use demonstration to highlight specific teaching points but in doing so, they discourage risk-taking and experimentation by pupils to the extent that the practical work becomes too predictable.
- Teachers' ongoing assessment informs their judgements on pupils' achievement and effort in the subject. These are reported to parents annually.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum enables teachers and learners to meet the objectives of the Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum.
- Pupils are given a range of opportunities to use computer software to explore colour and pattern and occasionally use the internet to research artists' work.
- The subject supports pupils' spiritual development very effectively where the school's strong Catholic ethos shines through. The subject leader has collected an outstanding range of religious art and artefacts to provoke thought and reflection. These are beautifully exhibited for pupils to appreciate and they speak fondly of them.

- Visiting artists are employed to work alongside the pupils enabling them to benefit from their specialist knowledge. These events provide a level of choice, experimentation and creativity that is not always replicated in lessons.
- The exciting range of media, materials and the full range of processes that pupils are introduced to provides them with a good foundation for future learning.
- The school takes full advantage of opportunities for pupils to take part in community projects to extend pupils' experiences in the subject. For example, in taking part in a major project to design and paint hoardings around the new health centre pupils made an excellent contribution to the community.

Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management in art and design are satisfactory with some good features.

- As subject leader, you display great enthusiasm for art and design and staff benefit from your expert subject knowledge and passion for the subject.
- The quality of display is excellent. Communal areas are enhanced by a gallery of permanent works by artists and pupils exhibited to a very high standard.
- The school's art policy is comprehensive and reflects the school's aims. Nonetheless, aspirations for open-ended tasks and differentiation based on pupils' individual abilities and needs are not consistently realised in practice. This is because monitoring opportunities especially to observe the quality of teaching are few. In addition, staff have few opportunities to share good practice through team teaching and/or coaching strategies.
- Teachers benefit from opportunities to refer to the subject leader's meticulous collection of pupils' work that he uses to guide teachers' assessments. You have identified that staff require a clearer understanding of how to level work to raise their expectations.
- Instability in staffing has been successfully overcome. You are aware that this has, in the past, contributed to inconsistencies in the delivery of the subject. The school improvement plan shows that the school aims to develop a more creative curriculum. A subject development plan setting out appropriate activities identifies the subject's contribution in achieving this.
- Resources to support teachers in their planning are helpful and accessible and regular professional training improves their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Subject issue: how effectively connections to the work of other artists, craftworkers and designers promote the pupils' creativity

This is satisfactory.

- There are ample opportunities provided in the curriculum for pupils to appreciate the work of other artists, designers and craftspeople and to analyse the visual and tactile qualities of their work. However, opportunities for them to exploit what they learn from the work and to apply this knowledge creatively are more limited.
- The school's gallery of permanent works is inspiring and provides a diverse range of examples for all pupils to aspire to.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve teachers' understanding of progression
- achieve greater balance between teachers' objective led planning and pupils' creativity
- provide more opportunities for staff to share good practice in the subject.

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

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector