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Dear Mrs Fox

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11 November 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 and the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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 are well below expectations for their age. A good range of appropriate creative activities are on offer inside the classroom, particularly in the Nursery. Outside the range is more limited but nevertheless satisfactory. These enable the children to use their imagination through role play and make-believe and to explore new materials, media and processes. The children are encouraged to be as independent as possible from a very early age for example, by selecting their own recyclable materials and using them to make their own art with complete freedom of choice. Opportunities for children to

make 'big art' are plentiful often working supportively with one another. Alongside, adults support children in learning new skills through open ended experimental activities such as making decorations for a birthday party or creating rangoli patterns with sand. As a result the children make rapid progress towards the early learning goals for creative development.

- Through Key Stages 1 and 2, the picture is more variable. Pupils make good progress where teaching is confident and teachers' subject knowledge is secure, but this is not yet consistent.
- Most pupils make satisfactory progress in the subject and reach broadly average targets for their age by the time they reach the end of Year 6.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop their creativity are plentiful where teaching is strongest. In these classes the pupils freely experiment, mix media and create original art work.
- Pupils' develop limited knowledge and understanding of artists, designers and craftspeople from different cultures and countries.
- Work seen in pupils' sketchbooks shows that they are used mainly for planning purposes and that there is insufficient opportunity for them to build their own personal journals of ideas, feelings and thoughts.
- Most girls and boys say that they enjoy the subject and work with sustained interest and enthusiasm in lessons. They display good attitudes towards the subject.
- The pupils work well independently in a calm and reflective manner.

Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Lessons are efficiently organised and well resourced.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively and pupils respond positively to their guidance and advice. In all lessons seen, pupils' behaviour was good and they used tools and materials carefully.
- Teachers plan pupils' work carefully according to specific objectives. They confidently use demonstration to highlight specific teaching points and are mindful to ensure just the right balance of observation and practical application.
- Some teachers lack understanding of skills progression resulting in some gaps in pupils' learning as they move through the school.
- Systems for assessment are being developed and the school is aware that teachers require more guidance in how to assess and level pupils' work.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features.

- The curriculum enables teachers and learners to meet the objectives of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the National Curriculum.
- The school's chosen scheme of work ensures that pupils learn to carefully manipulate a broad range of materials, media and tools. This provides them with a good foundation for future learning. However,

curriculum planning does not always specify with sufficient precision how pupils' skills develop.

- 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.
- A lunch time club targets vulnerable pupils with social and emotional difficulties. They are extremely well supported through the subject; many thrive on the therapeutic nature of the craft activities provided.
- Visiting artists are employed to work alongside the pupils enabling them to benefit from their specialist knowledge. This extends their experiences in the subject which are very limited when they start school.
- 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 designing and painting ceramic tiles for a permanent fixture, pupils made a positive contribution to the community.

Leadership and management of art and design

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

- The subject leader is an art and design specialist and staff benefit from her expert subject knowledge and passion for the subject. She manages the subject effectively and where she has had more influence, for example in the EYFS, outcomes are showing significant improvement.
- Opportunities are limited for the subject leader to work alongside other staff beyond her teaching area; particularly those who lack confidence in teaching the subject. As a result, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- Displays around the school are bright, uniformly presented and changed regularly. All year groups contribute work to the art gallery which provides a visual reference point for staff and visitors in how pupils' skills develop.
- The school's art policy is satisfactory and reflects the school's aims.
- The subject leader's evaluation of the subject is satisfactory ensuring that strengths and weaknesses have been revealed.
- The school aims to develop a more creative curriculum. A subject development plan setting out well-chosen activities identifies the subject's contribution in achieving this.
- Resources to support teachers in their planning are helpful and accessible and regular training is helping to improve 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.

- Pupils' have limited knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, designers and craft workers. Opportunities provided in the curriculum for pupils to analyse the visual and tactile qualities of

different artists' work are too few. Curriculum plans do not specify timely opportunities to explore artists' work from the past and apply this knowledge creatively. Nonetheless, the pupils regularly experience working alongside living artists and in doing so, create their own original art.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- Improve teachers' understanding of skills progression
- Ensure that pupils' develop a secure understanding of the work of artists, designers and craftspeople
- Develop sketchbooks as a means of pupils gathering a personal repertoire to refer to.

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