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19 November 2008

Mrs M Williams  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Williams

Ofsted survey inspection programme – art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 18 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 promotes 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 observation of lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- From average starting points in the Foundation Stage, pupils make satisfactory progress in their creative development so that they start Year 1 with attainment in-line with children of their age nationally. Progress continues to be satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2 so that standards are average overall by the time pupils leave in Year 6.
- The pupils enjoy the subject, developing the confidence to approach work on different scales in both two and three dimensions. They do well where they work on collaborative pieces, including in the Foundation Stage, reflecting their good social development.
- Pupils' exploration of materials and processes is satisfactory. They respond well to the tactile qualities offered, for example, by print

making and develop satisfactory control of the equipment involved. However, they are not consistently able to refine what they are doing or develop highly individual outcomes because they are not always clear enough about what it is they are aiming to achieve. The pupils' use of sketchbooks as a place to explore ideas is underdeveloped.

## Quality of teaching and learning in art and design

Teaching and learning in art and design are satisfactory.

- The majority of lessons offer a variety of well organised activities, taught by enthusiastic staff with whom pupils get on well.
- Overall objectives for learning and tasks to be completed build logically between lessons but are not always adapted well enough to ensure pupils of differing attainment are supported in making good progress.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory and they work hard to prepare lessons. Nevertheless, key features of learning are sometimes not explained clearly enough to pupils. The school is working hard to improve this, for example by teachers working together on planning.
- Pupils are given satisfactory guidance for improvement although there are variations in the quality of this. Verbal feedback is regular and appreciated by pupils with the best challenging them to think for themselves. This is not routinely the case and overall, the pupils are not involved enough in moving themselves forward. Marking is patchy.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in art and design is satisfactory.

- The curriculum offers a good range of starting points involving direct observation and imagination. Subject-based projects link well in most cases to cross-curricular themes, adding relevance to pupils' learning.
- The order in which pupils encounter and re-visit visual language such as tone and colour, or processes such as drawing, ensures they build their knowledge and skills progressively in most respects.
- As in the planning of individual lessons, longer term curriculum plans do not always offer sufficient support to staff as to how pupils of differing attainment can be provided for and challenged.
- The subject makes a good contribution to work involving the local community such as that made recently for the Biddenden Blaze firework display. Pupils enjoy these activities and find them motivating.

## Leadership and management of art and design

The leadership and management of art and design are satisfactory.

- The school has a reasonably clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. The impact of recent actions, for example to develop teaching, is making a satisfactory impact on standards.
- Priorities for further improvement are appropriate although in some cases they are insufficiently precise to be measurable and not always related closely enough to outcomes for the pupils.
- Relatively limited use is made of resources beyond the school such as subject networks to enhance the quality of provision.

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

This is satisfactory.

- The pupils understand well the value of referring to the work of other creative practitioners, developing satisfactory skills in critical analysis. They make reasonably good use of what they learn although outcomes tend to be limited to work 'in the style of' what they have looked at rather than stimulating them to more independent creative activity.
- The selection of creative practitioners with whom to make links is satisfactory, with some teachers needing more support to broaden the range of connections made. The pupils' experience is particularly limited in relation to contemporary practice because they do not have opportunities to work with living artists, craftworkers or designers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve teachers' subject knowledge so they are able to plan work for individual lessons and over the longer term which meets the needs of pupils of differing abilities more effectively
- involve pupils fully in assessing their own work and deciding how to improve it so their outcomes are more individual
- give pupils a better understanding of the work of contemporary creative practitioners to support their own work
- ensure subject development priorities relate closely to pupils' achievement and are precise enough to be measurable.

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