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Mr D Edwards  
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Dear Mr Edwards

Ofsted survey inspection programme – art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 20 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 a sample of lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- The pupils greatly enjoy art and design lessons and make good progress so that standards are above average overall by Year 6.
- They develop good control of materials and processes and respond well to exploring the properties for example of various types of paint.
- Their use of aspects of visual language such as colour or shape to explore and communicate ideas is good. This was evident in Year 5 pupils' costume designs for characters from Aladdin.

- Learning in the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Their good social skills are evident in collaborative activities such as discussions. They also take full advantage of opportunities to think about important issues like the environment through their work, supporting their moral and spiritual development.
- The pupils have good skills in refining their work in lessons and over time. Sketchbooks are used well for this purpose. The girls are more thoughtful about how they do this and remain more focused on key learning objectives during lessons. This leads to their making faster overall progress than the boys who, although often producing interesting and innovative ideas, do not always build on them as fully.

## Quality of teaching and learning in art and design

Teaching and learning in art and design are good.

- Lessons are well organised occasions with a pleasant atmosphere for learning and varied activities which sustain pupils' attention well. The use of questioning and paired discussion to extend pupils' speaking, listening and thinking skills is good and sometimes outstanding.
- Teachers are committed to the subject and work well to prepare interesting activities and resources, including dressing up as figures from a Lowry painting for Year 6 pupils in one of the lessons seen.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported so they make the same progress from their starting points as other pupils.
- Activities in lessons are well planned overall to build learning. However, tasks are sometimes not varied enough to meet the needs of individual pupils or of groups, such as boys, to ensure they make best progress. Reference to pupils' National Curriculum levels is helping with this although is a relatively recent initiative which has further to go.
- Teachers provide good individual guidance for improvement through discussion. Marking has been inconsistent but is now better and the school is well focused on making further improvement.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in art and design is good.

- The curriculum builds well on pupils' prior learning. It offers an interesting and varied range of themes which help pupils to learn about different genres within art and design and to make valid connections with other subjects across the curriculum.
- The introduction and re-visiting of key processes such as drawing is managed well as is the pupils' experience of design, which is coordinated effectively with their work in design technology.
- The pupils experience a broad range of processes although the school is working to improve the limited use made of information and communication technology within pupils' work.
- Good connections are made with the local area as a stimulus for learning. These include visits to local places of interest such as Tudeley Church with its stained glass windows by Marc Chagall.

- Opportunities for pupils to extend their work are offered through the art club and this is a particularly effective forum for supporting those identified as gifted and talented. Good use is made of a newly developed gallery space to showcase the work of individual pupils.

## Leadership and management of art and design

The leadership and management of art and design are good.

- The subject is valued in the school as part of a rounded education. The subject leader is committed and energetic and, in the year she has been in post, has made a good impact on the quality of provision.
- Monitoring and evaluation are conscientiously carried out through scrutiny of work and planning, and increasingly through reference to information about pupils' progress in relation to National Curriculum levels. This enables professional development for colleagues to be planned and adaptations made to the curriculum. The priorities cited in the subject development plan are appropriate although it isn't always clear how their impact on pupils' achievement will be measured.
- The subject leader provides a good link between her colleagues and wider subject networks and developments. She makes good use of local resources such as secondary schools to support the subject.

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

This is good.

- The pupils experience a wide range of work by creative practitioners, including contemporary makers and those working locally, with whom the school regularly hosts short residencies. The emphasis in such activity has historically been on fine art rather than craft or design.
- Most projects make a link with the work of others and, through this, pupils understand well that creative practitioners learn much from what has been done before.
- The pupils have good skills in the critical analysis of the work of others. Most are able to apply what they learn in their own work, as evident in the work made by pupils after visiting a local sculpture park.
- Contact with creative practitioners gives pupils a good understanding of the role played by artists in society and of how they make a living as well as of the working processes they go through.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve the consistency with which teaching is planned to meet the needs of all pupils and of boys in particular
- make more use of assessment information about pupils' achievement when setting priorities in subject development planning and checking the impact of actions taken.

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