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Dear Mrs Waterman

Ofsted survey inspection programme – art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 01 December 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 observation of lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- The children start the Foundation Stage with very low attainment for their ages including their creative and language skills as well as in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Very many children speak English as an additional language. Progress is good in creative development in the Nursery and Reception classes although attainment is still below that expected by the start of Year 1, especially for boys.
- Achievement continues to be good between Years 1 and 6. Pupils greatly enjoy lessons and most behave very well although the girls sustain their focus on work for longer and make better progress overall as a result. The standards reached by the end of Year 2 are below average but pupils catch up with their peers nationally by the end of Year 6. Some individual pieces of work are of high quality, notably

when pupils work with practising artists as in the collaborative piece made for the playground.

- Good progress is made in exploring the properties of materials. Pupils also make good gains in using aspects of visual language such as tone and colour to depict what they see and imagine, for example Year 6 pupils had used colour sequences to help show figures in motion.
- Pupils' ability to refine and develop their work is below average.

Quality of teaching and learning in art and design

Teaching and learning in art and design are good.

- Teachers are enthusiastic and work hard to prepare lessons. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to show images of artists' work and demonstrations of processes are effective and are valued by the pupils.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive. Teachers make very good efforts to develop pupils' speaking, listening and thinking skills because they know this is a weak area. Strategies to support those speaking English as an additional language are good, including working with same-language partners to develop these pupils' understanding of instructions and of ideas related to their work.
- Learning objectives for lessons are good overall and teachers explain them well. Activities are varied and keep pupils interested. However some opportunities are missed to challenge pupils of differing abilities by adapting tasks to meet their varying levels of need. Teachers have a sound understanding of each pupil's attainment level but it is only in the Foundation Stage that this information is used fully when tracking pupils' progress and planning teaching.
- Individual verbal guidance for improvement in lessons is good. Some marking in sketchbooks is also effective in setting out next steps clearly although this is not always the case.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in art and design is good.

- The school works hard to adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. Cross-curricular links make learning relevant and enhance pupils' enjoyment. For example Year 2 pupils were excited about making a collage about the Great Fire of London, using their knowledge of seventeenth century house construction to inform their decisions.
- The pupils' experiences are well planned to balance art, craft and design. The school is working hard to better coordinate the teaching of design with that in design technology and address some lack of clarity on the part of pupils as to how the two areas relate.
- Pupils are given a structured introduction to the elements of visual language like pattern and texture. Drawing for varied purposes is well planned so that pupils make good progress in using it as a means for recording what they see as well as the development of ideas.
- Very good use is made of resources such as museums and galleries, including those found locally, to enrich pupils' experiences. The school has been working with Creative Partnerships for the last three years and this has afforded very good opportunities for pupils to learn

directly from artists. Very good additional opportunities have also been provided for pupils identified as gifted and talented.

Leadership and management of art and design

The leadership and management of art and design are good.

- The subject leader provides clear direction for subject development. She has a good track record in raising the profile of the subject and improving the quality of provision, for example by making contact and sustaining relationships with Creative Partnerships.
- Subject monitoring is effective through scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning. Excellent use is made of discussions with pupils to gauge their response to the subject. The outcomes are used well to identify priorities for subject development. However, too little use is made of assessment information about pupils' progress through the National Curriculum programmes of study to underpin the setting of priorities or to monitor the impact of steps to address them.
- The subject leader is proactive in providing professional development for her colleagues. Her good subject knowledge enables her to offer training herself and to select other external sources.

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

- The pupils make good progress in using the work of others to develop their own creative practice; however the low base from which they start means the skills developed in this respect are satisfactory.
- Reference to the work of creative practitioners is an embedded feature of subject teaching. The links made are logical and give pupils a good understanding of the value of referring to the work of others.
- The good opportunities for pupils to work directly with creative practitioners add much to their achievement and enjoyment and are a distinct feature of the school's provision.
- Through contact with living artists, and through visiting galleries, pupils gain a good awareness of processes such as researching, taking risks and making mistakes that many artists go through. This is evident in the pupils directly involved but the school knows there is room to spread the benefits more widely and is closely focused on this for the next round of activities being planned.
- The school places much emphasis on developing pupils' creativity but is at the early stages of identifying how to monitor this so as to plan teaching in response to pupils' differing levels of creative development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring activities in lessons are adapted to help pupils of varying ability make the best possible progress towards challenging individual goals for overall achievement and for their creativity
- making more use of information about pupils' progress in relation the National Curriculum programmes of study when planning priorities for subject development and monitoring the impact of past actions.

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