

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045  
F 020 7421 6855  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr S Blight  
Headteacher  
Standens Barn Primary School  
Flaxwell Court  
Standens Barn  
Northampton  
NN3 9EH

Dear Mr Blight

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 3 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 observations of two 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. Thorough and accurate assessment of their skills is used to plan activities to promote and accelerate their creative development. Inside the classroom and outdoors well chosen activities capture children's imagination and interest. For example, they play with coloured ice cubes watching how the colours merge as they melt on paper. Outside the children create spirals from glass nuggets and pebbles after looking at sculptures by Andy Goldsworthy. Through role play and make-believe they explore the Christmas story. These activities enable the children to use their imagination and to explore new materials, media and

processes. Alongside, adults support children in learning new skills with selective and sensitive intervention. As a result, the children make rapid progress towards the early learning goals for creative development.

- Through Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make steady and satisfactory progress. Most pupils reach broadly average targets for their age by the end of Year 6.
- The school has identified a gap between the higher achievement of girls and that of boys and work is in progress to adapt the curriculum accordingly to raise boys' engagement and performance.
- The pupils have some opportunities to work on collaborative projects such as large scale pictures using mixed-media. These opportunities provide scope for choice and self selected materials resulting in original work.
- Pupils develop adequate knowledge and understanding of artists, designers and craftspeople from different cultures and countries because teachers often use them as a source of inspiration in lessons.
- The pupils develop good cultural awareness through the subject. For example, during a recent visit to a Hindu temple pupils learned how faith is expressed through art and made drawings on location. This provided the starting point for further work using different media.
- Most girls and boys say that they enjoy the subject and some work with great enthusiasm in lessons. In Key Stage 1, a painting activity prompted one pupil to spontaneously announce 'I love doing art. It's my favourite!' They display good attitudes towards the subject and use tools and materials carefully.

## Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Lessons are efficiently organised and resourced satisfactorily.
- Relationships are good and pupils behave well ensuring that their time is used productively and that they use tools and materials carefully.
- Teachers confidently use demonstration to model processes and provide useful tips to assist pupils in manipulating media successfully.
- Good use is made of electronic whiteboards to support learning using images of art to inspire and to highlight specific teaching points.
- Teachers plan pupils' work according to specific objectives linked to the National Curriculum. However, whilst planning identifies the activities that pupils will undertake, the skills that they should apply and develop are insufficiently clear.
- The pupils are organised in mixed age classes with a wide variation in pupils' ability, maturity and skills. The planned activities are not always tailored well enough to accommodate this wide range. As a result, some pupils do not have the required level of skill to be entirely successful whilst the most able are insufficiently challenged.
- Teachers have just begun to level pupils' work according to the national targets for attainment. This is work in progress and the school is aware that staff require more guidance to develop precision in evaluating pupils' work.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum enables teachers and learners to meet the objectives of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the National Curriculum. The school is developing a themed approach in curriculum planning to enable pupils to make connections between subjects. In Key Stage 2 art and design is taught discretely as well as through other subjects.
- The school adapts the curriculum to reflect pupils' current interests. For example, the 2008 Olympics provided the inspiration for Year 5 and 6 pupils to explore figure drawing and make 3-dimensional models of athletes in action. Many boys found this theme exciting and engaging because of its connection to sports and athletics.
- Art weeks are much enjoyed by the pupils because they have more opportunity to choose the materials and media they wish to use and are given freedom to experiment.
- Pupils are given adequate opportunities to use computer software to explore colour and pattern.
- Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported effectively through the subject. They enjoy expressing their ideas and feelings through art with sensitive support from adults. They thrive on their successes and this helps to develop their sense of self-worth.
- Those pupils with a keen interest in the subject are able to choose from a range of art, craft and design activities during 'Golden Time' adding to their pleasure and extending their experiences.
- School visits to places of interest provide opportunities for pupils to draw on location and extend their experiences in the subject.
- Pupils have limited opportunities to become involved in community arts projects and festivals or to work alongside living artists.

## Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management in art and design are satisfactory.

- The foundation subjects including art and design are currently under review. Temporary arrangements are in place for subject leadership, shared between you and your deputy headteacher. You have recognised that the subject team covering the arts was not working effectively to raise standards and have sought governors' approval to re-launch a single subject leader approach to strengthen leadership.
- A new tracking system has been introduced showing the proportions of pupils who perform above, at or below expectations in each year group following end of unit assessments. However, this information is not yet being used well enough by teachers to tailor the work according to what the pupils already know and can do.
- The leadership team ensures that teachers with limited subject knowledge are supported through professional development programmes to develop their skills and understanding. However currently, there is no monitoring of teaching and learning to measure the impact of the training.

- There is no written statement to guide staff in how the subject contributes to the school's aims and how the uniqueness of the subject relates to the school's policy on teaching and learning.

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

This is satisfactory.

- Pupils have adequate knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, designers and craft workers. Curriculum plans specify opportunities to explore artists' work from different times, countries and cultures including contemporary practice and these studies are often used as the starting point for units of work. In the EYFS, children have open ended activities to freely explore their thoughts and ideas after they have looked at an artist's work. The older pupils learn about the lives of artists and the main characteristics of their work. They mimic the approaches used through a guided activity with a set outcome in mind. They do not have enough freedom to use what they learn from others for their own purposes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- promote pupils' progress by structuring skills progression in different processes and elements of art
- use assessment information to match objectives and challenges more effectively to different pupils' needs, interests and abilities
- ensure that subject leadership is clearly defined and, through regular monitoring, evaluates and improves the impact of teaching on learning.

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