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Ms J Wilson  
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Dear Ms Wilson

Ofsted survey inspection programme – art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 2 February 2009 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.

- The children achieve satisfactory standards in Reception. School assessments indicate they now make satisfactory progress in their creative development following a period when their progress in this area was too slow. Progress is satisfactory for older pupils so that they reach average standards by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.
- The pupils enjoy the subject, responding well to practical tasks. They behave well and cooperate sensibly with each other.

- The pupils make good progress in learning to control tools such as brushes and printing equipment and use them confidently. Their skills are weaker in refining their work. They do not always understand the characteristics of successful work so as to judge their own progress or develop outcomes which are highly individual.
- The use of sketchbooks as a place to develop ideas is satisfactory. However, pupils make insufficient use of their sketchbooks to review, explore alternatives and refine work.

## Quality of teaching and learning in art and design

Teaching and learning in art and design are satisfactory.

- Classrooms are calm, well organised environments. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and good routines for work are developed early. Lessons involve varied sequences of activities which sustain pupils' focus and additional adults usually contribute well to learning by supporting individual pupils.
- Weaker aspects of teaching are associated with teachers' subject knowledge so that on occasion the work of artists or guidance about practical processes is not explained in sufficient detail or supported with adequate exemplification.
- Teaching for Reception children is good because activities are better tailored to meet individual children's needs. This quality is less evident in the teaching of older pupils where some opportunities are missed to challenge pupils of differing abilities.
- The pupils receive regular feedback from teachers through marking in sketchbooks and discussion in lessons. Much is of good quality but some lacks precision, for example over why work is praised. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to assess their own work.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in art and design is satisfactory.

- In Reception experiences are well planned with effective links between children's creative development and other areas of learning and a good balance between child-initiated and adult-led tasks.
- The curriculum for older pupils offers satisfactory progression with logical reinforcement of knowledge and skills from year to year so that, for example, pupils add to their repertoire of drawing skills.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 encounter a satisfactory range of materials and processes. They have good opportunities to work on different scales and in both two and three dimensions and explore observational and imaginative starting points. However, the majority of the processes used are design or fine-art based and they have too few opportunities to learn about craft.
- Some effective links are made between the subject and other areas of the curriculum through topic-based projects. These are welcomed by the pupils as adding relevance to learning although it isn't always clear enough that pupils' knowledge and skills in art, craft and design are systematically developed in the planning of these projects.

## Leadership and management of art and design

The leadership and management of art and design are satisfactory.

- The subject leader, new in-post this year, works effectively with the previous subject leader, who has taken on a wider role in the school, in moving the subject forward.
- A sound range of monitoring activity, including scrutiny of pupils' work and staff planning, gives her a satisfactory understanding of strengths and what needs to be improved. Some forms of monitoring, like lesson observation and analysis of assessment information, are underused in adding to the subject leader's grasp of subject effectiveness.
- Development planning is well focused on the areas identified for improvement and there is evidence of positive impact being made in areas such as the improved use of sketchbooks.
- The subject leader works well with other staff to share and develop resources and ideas for teaching. Links with outside organisations such as the local authority provide additional support for teaching but there is scope to develop these further, for example to benefit from local gallery education provision.

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

- The pupils develop satisfactory knowledge about creative practitioners. While good steps are taken to involve local residents with art skills in teaching the pupils, there are too few opportunities for them to learn about a range of contemporary practitioners, including from western and non-western backgrounds.
- Teachers regularly introduce the work of creative practitioners into projects and pupils understand well the importance of learning from them. They develop satisfactory skills in analysing the work seen but teachers sometimes miss opportunities to develop these skills fully.
- The pupils make satisfactory use of what they find out about the work of other creative practitioners to support their own practical work. Nevertheless they do not always understand the key ideas or processes well enough to make full use of them. For example pupils learning about LS Lowry were not challenged to think enough about why he made the decisions about composition in his paintings when applying his use of perspective in their own work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve teachers' subject knowledge so that practical processes and the critical analysis of other practitioners' work are securely taught
- ensure activities in lessons always challenge pupils of differing ability and that pupils are clear about the criteria for successful work so they play more of a role in deciding how to improve
- enrich the curriculum by including more references to contemporary and craft-based practitioners, including those from a range of cultures

- widen the range of monitoring activity used by the subject leader to identify priorities for development and to monitor the impact made.

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.

Ofsted gathers information on the immediate and longer-term impact of survey inspections, both on the institutions themselves, and with a view to improving its own processes. To this end, I should be grateful if you would complete the attached questionnaire and return it within the next ten days. We have also just sent a copy of the questionnaire by email. Please return your completed questionnaire to either the email or postal address on the form, not to me. We may also contact some schools by telephone after several months in order for us to gain a picture of longer-term impact. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long  
Her Majesty's Inspector