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Dear Mr Hood

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 02 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, observations of two lessons and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

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 broadly meet expectations. There is a wide range of opportunities for children to explore processes using a variety of media and materials. They learn to look closely at natural and manufactured objects and through observational drawing, for example of live stick insects, they develop interpretive skills that help them to understand the world. The children learn about the work of artists, particularly their use of colour and have opportunities to talk about what they see and visualise their ideas before making a start on

their own interpretations. Skills are taught well with adults modelling and providing direction. However, there are fewer opportunities for children to initiate their own learning making choices and decisions about what they want to use, make, explore, invent or imagine. Outside, a limited but nevertheless satisfactory range of activities extend children's creative skills. The children make satisfactory progress with most working securely within or exceeding the early learning goals for creative development by the end of Reception.

- Through Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils continue to make steady progress. Most pupils reach broadly average targets for their age by the time they reach the end of Year 6.
- Pupils have just begun to use a sketchbook to develop their ideas and deepen their understanding. However, the school has not given sufficient consideration to the purpose and usage of sketchbooks to ensure that they are utilised to maximum effect.
- From an early age pupils use computer software very effectively to explore colour, shape and pattern in design. Their skills develop rapidly through good teaching and curriculum planning. This enables pupils to achieve high standards in design through use of technology.
- Pupils develop satisfactory knowledge and understanding of artists, designers and craftspeople from different cultures and countries.
- Most girls and boys say that they enjoy the subject because 'we use our own ideas' and 'show our creative side'. They work productively in lessons and display good attitudes towards the subject.
- Curriculum planning is satisfactory and follows the school's chosen scheme of work. In individual lesson plans, not enough account is taken of the most able and talented pupils' skills. Given the same starting points and level of challenge as others, they do not achieve as highly as they should.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they use tools and materials carefully and are conscious of safety issues. For example, when creating sculptures from natural materials one pupil immediately drew attention to the need for caution in handling berries.

## Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Lessons are efficiently organised and well resourced. The best teaching generates a lively pace incorporating a range of approaches matched to objectives with a variety of activities for pupils to explore independently.
- In all lessons seen, the teachers energetically deliver a detailed input at the start of the lesson with stimuli, demonstration, and direction. This provides pupils with a clear idea of how they should work through the task but at the same time reduces the range of pupils' responses to a narrow brief and proportionately allows too little time for practical activity and exploration.
- Teachers use the electronic whiteboards skilfully to support learning using images of art to inspire, highlight teaching points, and demonstrating processes with the aid of a digital film camera, so that everyone can see.
- Teaching assistants provide appropriate support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities during the main activity so that they

successfully complete tasks. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to maximise their input for example, at the start of lessons.

- Systems for assessment are being developed. The school is aware that teachers require more guidance in recognising progression so that they can accurately assess and level pupils' work. The pupils are at the early stages of developing their skills in evaluating their own 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. Effective links are developing with other subjects, for example, in religious education where pupils investigate then design Islamic patterns and in literacy where they design decoration for a living story teller's chair having established his preferences via e-mail messaging.
- The school's chosen scheme of work ensures that pupils learn to carefully manipulate a broad range of materials, media and tools. This provides them with a good foundation for future learning. However, curriculum planning does not always specify with sufficient precision, how pupils' skills develop.
- There are limited opportunities for pupils to extend their experiences in the subject by working alongside an artist, visiting a gallery or attending clubs. However, the school is reaching out to the community to develop links and draw upon the expertise of others, for example, with the village art group.
- 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.
- The school is very successfully engaging parents in supporting their child's learning through the subject. A recent homework challenge encouraged the whole family work as a team to create a sculpture, poster or picture from newspaper. The outcomes are of excellent quality and extremely original. Exhibited in an eye catching display, they powerfully demonstrate creativity and have generated much interest and discussion amongst pupils, staff, parents and visitors.

## Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management in art and design are satisfactory with some good features.

- The new subject leader is an experienced, effective leader with a keen interest in the subject. In a short time, she has accurately identified strengths and weaknesses through an audit of current practice.
- The subject leader has taken swift action to secure improvement devising a comprehensive plan of action. She has gathered and evaluated pupils' work giving her a secure understanding of standards across the school and has plans securely in place to include staff in assessing pupils' work to develop their skills in making judgements.
- Teachers' professional development needs have been identified and a training programme has been devised in response.

- The subject leader is successfully tapping into the subject expertise of others to develop support networks.

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

This is satisfactory.

- Pupils have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, designers and craft workers. There are examples of where pupils have used ideas to influence their own art, for example in the EYFS where children make connections to impressionist painters' work in selecting colour for their own painting activities. The pupils have very limited opportunity to work alongside living artists to extend their creative experiences and gain insight into how artists develop their ideas.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- in lessons, achieve a better balance in the time allocated to teacher input and pupils' involvement in practical and creative activity
- improve teachers' understanding of skills progression
- develop pupils' use of sketchbooks.

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