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Dear Mrs Magliocco

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 observation of lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- During the Foundation Stage children make good progress in their creative development and attain the expected levels on joining Year 1. Their attainment on entry is broadly in line with that expected although there are weaknesses in language skills, with a high proportion speaking English as an additional language, and in social development.
- Progress is satisfactory between Years 1 and 6 so that the standards reached are in line with those seen nationally by the time the pupils leave. This represents an improvement since the subject was last reported on in 2003 when standards were judged to be inadequate.

- Pupils respond well to the subject, enjoying lessons and behaving well. They develop satisfactory skills in exploring the properties of materials such as paint and in their understanding of the different uses which can be made of processes like drawing and printmaking.
- The pupils' development of ideas, both from observational and imaginative starting points, is a relative weakness. The school has started to get pupils more involved in assessing their own work but they do not always understand the objectives for successful work well enough to help them judge the progress they make or what to do next.

Quality of teaching and learning in art and design

Teaching and learning in art and design are satisfactory.

- Teachers work hard to prepare lessons so they include a good range of activities, including an emphasis on developing speaking and listening skills. Strategies like 'talk partners' are used well because teachers keep discussions well focused so they are useful in moving learning forward. Additional adults make a valuable contribution in managing behaviour and supporting pupils with English as an additional language.
- Learning objectives for lessons are satisfactory but key aspects of subject content are sometimes not explained or demonstrated well enough to pupils. This, alongside too little planning to meet the needs of pupils of varying abilities, slows progress overall.
- The school is working hard at improving the assessment of pupils' work and checking their progress in relation to the National Curriculum programmes of study. However there is further to go in systematically tracking achievement and using the outcomes to support planning.
- The guidance for improvement offered to pupils is often good during individual discussions with teachers in lessons. Marking in sketchbooks is regular and confirms strengths effectively but is patchy in indicating the steps for improvement.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in art and design is satisfactory.

- The school has worked hard to improve the curriculum. Progression in learning is now assured through well balanced experiences in different media and techniques and in learning about aspects of the visual language such as line, tone and colour.
- Starting points for projects are varied and interesting for pupils. They experience a good range of genres, like portraits. The skills they develop in art and design are used well in some other subjects, for example mosaics made as part of their work in history.
- Enrichment of the curriculum is satisfactory through an after-school club and extended activities for pupils identified as gifted and talented. Links to museums and galleries are limited but the subject leader is determined to improve on this and has suitable plans in place which include making use of what is available locally.

- Spiritual and cultural development through the subject is satisfactory. Pupils learn about ikon painting which links well to the school's Greek heritage. Examples of the subject being used to explore important issues are evident in images such as those made for remembrance day. Nevertheless, exploiting such potentially powerful stimuli for reflection through making visual work is inconsistent between classes.

Leadership and management of art and design

The leadership and management of art and design are satisfactory.

- The subject leader is new in her post this term but has set about her role with energy and commitment.
- She has made a good start at building on improvements already made and has identified areas requiring improvement. You have provided good support and have ensured that subject development goals align with those of the school as a whole.
- The subject leader's scrutiny of pupils' work, together with working alongside colleagues to help them plan activities, has helped her improve the quality of provision. Resources have been reorganised and she is beginning to make links with outside organisations so that national and regional subject initiatives are reflected in the school.
- The priorities for the subject in the development plan are satisfactory but some are not measurable enough in relation to their intended impact on pupils' achievement. Insufficient use is made of assessment information as a means to monitor the impact of steps already taken to improve subject provision.

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

- Work in the subject routinely contains reference to the work of other creative practitioners. Pupils understand well that this is an important feature of how artists and designers learn and that the people whose work they study have themselves learned from others.
- The pupils develop reasonable skills in critical analysis of what they see and teachers use interactive whiteboards well to show images. The impact of looking at the work of others is evident to a satisfactory degree in pupils' work. However key ideas underpinning the work seen are sometimes overlooked by teachers so that pupils gain only a partial understanding of the point being made and this holds them back.
- Contact with practitioners, or directly with artwork, is limited. As a result the pupils miss out on learning about the processes that creative people go through. This too restricts key creative behaviours such as innovation, risk taking and exploration.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve the quality of information about pupils' attainment and progress and make consistent use of it to plan lessons which meet the needs of those of differing ability in each class
- ensure key aspects of subject learning and of successful work are explained clearly to pupils so they can assess their own progress better and make decisions more independently about how to improve

- increase opportunities for pupils to work with creative practitioners and encounter original work first hand, in order to promote their creativity
- ensure that subject development priorities relate to outcomes for pupils and that the impact of steps taken to improve provision are checked by reference to a full range of information about pupils' achievement.

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