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Dear Mrs Harvey

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 January 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 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 you and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observations of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of art and design was judged to be satisfactory with some good features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- The number of children joining Reception is inconstant with some cohorts as small as four. As a result, children's attainment on entry varies year on year but is typically average. The school has just started to assess creative development at the beginning of the Reception year to provide a baseline for measuring future progress.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are taught in a mixed age class. The organisation allows children to choose activities that appeal to them as well as having occasional opportunity to learn new skills and make art with pupils in Key Stage 1. Those with special gifts and talents learn from others and quickly pick up new skills whilst those at an early stage of development benefit from additional adult support. As a result, all children make satisfactory progress to reach or exceed the early learning goals by the end of the year.
- Through Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make steady and satisfactory progress. The school's assessments show that most pupils reach broadly average targets for their age by the end of Year 6. Overall, pupils' practical skills are stronger than their performance in exploring and developing ideas, particularly in Key Stage 2. The school is addressing this by providing more opportunities to explore the potential of media and materials as they work. Evidence seen in pupils' sketchbooks shows that this is beginning to have a positive impact.
- Pupils use information and communication technology very proficiently to explore design, create images and make animated film.
- Boys and girls develop skills in using textiles systematically, from an early age, often creating good quality, large scale wall hangings.
- The pupils have some opportunities to work on collaborative projects such as large scale mosaics and sculptures. These opportunities provide scope for choice resulting in original work and promote team work that contributes to their good personal development.
- Relationships are good and pupils behave well ensuring that their time is used productively and that they use tools and materials carefully. The pupils manage their work spaces with high levels of independence. Their efficiency in retrieving and clearing away tools and resources is impressive.
- Pupils develop good knowledge and understanding of artists, designers and craftspeople from different cultures, countries and times because teachers often use them as a source of inspiration in lessons. One pupil remarked that she liked 'learning about artists and how they work'.
- The pupils develop good cultural and spiritual awareness through the subject as they explore art from different religions and cultures through the religious education syllabus.
- Girls and boys say that they enjoy the subject and their good attitudes and dispositions are evident in the level of their engagement seen in lessons. Comments made by pupils during the inspection include 'It's fun. It doesn't feel like work'; 'We are always learning something new'; 'You get to explore and find out for yourself'.

Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Secure curriculum planning ensures that lessons are efficiently organised and resourced satisfactorily. Teachers' plan pupils' work according to the school's chosen published scheme of work. However, whilst planning identifies the activities that pupils will undertake, the skills that they should apply and develop are insufficiently clear.

- Teachers confidently use demonstration to model processes and provide useful guidance to help pupils to evaluate their work effectively.
- 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 with pupils often having the same starting points regardless of their level of attainment. Any differentiation is by outcome or the level of support provided.
- The school has just begun to level pupils' work according to the national targets for attainment. This is work in progress and the school is aware that more guidance is required to develop confidence and precision in evaluating pupils' work.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- Provision for creative development in the EYFS is satisfactory. The children have access to a suitable range of activities to stimulate creativity inside the classroom and periodically outdoors. Small world activities invite children to create their own environments using inviting, exciting resources and materials that stimulate imaginative play. Other activities such as the role play area are less attractive because although the resources change, the environment is not transformed convincingly enough to transport children into a new world of make-believe.
- The curriculum enables teachers and learners to meet most of the EYFS and the National Curriculum objectives. The school has developed a themed approach in curriculum planning to enable pupils to make connections between subjects. The subject leader has identified some gaps in the scheme of work and work is in progress to address this.
- The school adapts the curriculum to reflect pupils' current interests. The differing interests of boys and girls are catered for in curriculum planning.
- Arts events are much enjoyed by the pupils because they have opportunities to work with contemporary artists learning new skills and techniques. Last year, working with a mosaic artist, every pupil made a bespoke piece to add a striking splash of colour to brighten an otherwise drab concrete wall in the playground.
- School visits to places of interest, galleries and museums extend pupils' experiences in the subject and add to their enjoyment.
- Pupils have many opportunities to become involved in community arts projects and festivals where they proudly exhibit their work for the local community for example at the annual church flower festival.
- Extensive links with other schools in the United Kingdom and abroad enhance opportunities for pupils. For example, organising a visit to the Tate Modern with a link school contributes to its viability and provides pupils with the opportunity to explore their own responses to historic, modern and contemporary art in one of the country's leading galleries.

Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management in art and design are satisfactory.

- You are an effusive advocate of the subject which you lead with passion and enjoyment. This is reflected strongly in the vibrant school environment where pupils' work is displayed imaginatively and good quality books, artefacts and examples of art from all over the world provoke discussion and thought.
- 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.
- In your subject leader role, you keep up to date with developments in the art and design and add to your non-specialist expertise by attending suitable training sessions. Nonetheless, opportunities to share your knowledge and expertise with other staff are limited.
- Monitoring and evaluation in the subject is developing. This is bringing formality and greater precision to self-evaluation. The subject action plan currently lacks sufficient detail to be a useful tool in achieving improvement and securing gains in achievement and standards.
- Good links have been developed with local, national and international schools that enhance provision in the subject.
- Resources are plentiful and accessible to staff and pupils.

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

This is satisfactory.

- Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, designers and craft workers. The range of work they experience is extensive with good balances in the gender and specialism of artists. They 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. The pupils learn about the lives of artists and the main characteristics of their work. They mimic the approaches used through a guided activity often with a set outcome in mind. They do not have enough freedom to use what they learn from others for their own purposes. One pupil commented that he 'liked the way that artists work in different styles', another Year 2 pupil was delighted with her Picasso-style self-portrait.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- promote the progress of individual pupils in art, craft and design by:

- developing a shared understanding of progression in the subject
- establishing a clear curriculum overview that identifies increasing levels of challenge in developing subject skills, knowledge and understanding
- exemplifying expectations more explicitly
- using assessment information to inform planning and target setting in relation to pupils' individual needs, interests and developmental stage.

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