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Dear Ms Mistry

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 14 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 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 inadequate.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are inadequate.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) children's creative development is well below expectations. The school does not make an accurate assessment of their skills on entry so that progress can be measured through Nursery and Reception. However, the activities provided to develop children's creative skills are well-chosen. Children's representational drawing shows their limited understanding of human and animal forms and that most are at an early stage of developing drawing skills. Many are unable to manipulate basic tools such as scissors and paint brushes proficiently.

- In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils learn to use tools and manipulate a narrow range of media and a limited range of techniques. Choices are limited and this constrains their creativity. Pupils in both key stages learn to draw, paint, make collage and occasionally artefacts but skills are not taught progressively through a robust scheme of work neither is their work regularly assessed. As a result, teachers have no systems to measure pupils' progress to ensure that they are achieving all that they should.
- Recognising that pupils in Key Stage 2 should be learning how to use sketchbooks, the school has purchased good quality books and pupils have recently been introduced to using them. However, there is currently no shared understanding amongst staff as to their purpose and value to ensure that their use has a positive impact on raising standards and achievement.
- In all lessons seen, pupils behave well and use tools and materials carefully. The subject makes a valuable contribution to the personal development and well-being. Pupils say that they enjoy art and design activities and take an active part in assessing their successes. In a recent pupil survey, three quarters of pupils rated the subject as their favourite. 'You can use your imagination' and 'we make things and think about why we like it' are some of the reasons why.
- Pupils have limited understanding and knowledge of the work of artists, designers and craftworkers from different times, cultures and countries.

Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate.

- Lessons are efficiently organised and resourced satisfactorily.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively ensuring that they work safely and use the time productively. Support staff are deployed satisfactorily to support pupils' learning.
- Pupils are proficient in evaluating their work and are taught how to comment on others' work sensitively. However, in doing so, they are not using subject specific vocabulary as well as they should.
- There is a significant weakness in curriculum planning linked to the absence of regular assessment and systems for evaluating pupils' progress. Teachers plan discrete lessons well ensuring that the structure generates sufficient pace to sustain pupils' interest. However, staff have no access to information about pupils' prior learning and are therefore unable to base planning on what pupils already know and can do. In addition, the skills that pupils should apply and develop are insufficiently clear. As a result, some pupils do not have the required level of skill to be entirely successful whilst the most able are insufficiently challenged.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is inadequate.

- The range of curriculum provided is insufficiently broad.
- Provision for creative development in EYFS is entirely adequate ensuring that children learn and practise new skills through a balance of free play and adult direction. The sensitive support provided is unobtrusive and appropriate. The children relish good role play activities that develop their imagination well inside and outdoors. For example, some launch themselves enthusiastically into roles as medics in the make-believe surgery whilst others dress up as pirates and pursue their own imaginative adventures outside. However, other activities are more limited and opportunities are missed to include a creative dimension to further accelerate children's limited skills.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2 the subject is taught through cross-curricular themes. There are satisfactory links with literacy where pupils learn to sequence stories and empathise with characters through drawing and painting activities. The school uses national guidance to identify suitable units of work that link to the themes. However, these have not been adapted to meet the interests of pupils or to reflect the school's context.
- There is no over-arching subject curriculum plan in place to ensure that progress is structured by building subject skills, knowledge and understanding through a balance between the introduction of new experiences with revisiting and applying different ones.
- From an early age, pupils occasionally use computer software for design work.
- The school hosts an annual gifted and talented workshop for their own pupils and those from other local schools that sometimes has an art focus. Nonetheless, the school has not identified any pupils with special gifts and talents in art and design.
- Pupils with hearing impairment benefit from the visual dimension that the subject provides. In withdrawal groups, art and design features strongly providing learners with helpful visual references especially in relation to colour.
- Pupils' art work is exhibited to a satisfactory standard. A narrow range of papers are used to back display boards and mount pupils' work. In addition, there is little variation in the layout. Consequently, pupils' work is not displayed well enough to arouse interest or to capture onlookers' attention.
- Resources are organised efficiently but the range is very limited.
- Pupils rarely have opportunities to work on collaborative art projects.
- The school makes regular use of the local environment for pupils to draw on location and for taking digital photographs to develop ideas for art and design.

Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management in art and design are inadequate.

- The subject has been without leadership for almost three years. As a result, the subject has not been monitored, evaluated or reviewed for

too long. Consequently, teaching lacks precision and training to support development of their subject knowledge is not in place.

- Two non-specialist teachers have taken on the role with commitment and enthusiasm. They have made a promising start in auditing provision to establish the best way forward. They know the steps they need to take to secure improvement and to raise the subject's profile but it is too soon for this to have had discernable impact on pupils' achievement.
- The introduction of a robust scheme of work to include skills progression has rightly been identified as a priority for improvement in order to raise standards.
- You ensure that teachers with limited subject knowledge are supported through professional development programmes to develop their skills and understanding. Plans are in place for subject leaders to undertake necessary training.

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

This is inadequate.

- Pupils have limited knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, designers and craft workers. The pupils are introduced to the work of some painters through the school's chosen units of work and occasionally mimic the approaches used. They do not explore artists' work in sufficient depth or have opportunities to work with living artists to learn how to think and make like them.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- promote pupils' progress by structuring skills progression in different processes and elements of art
- develop an effective assessment system and use the 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
- promote pupils' ability to communicate and express ideas and feelings in creative ways by developing the 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.

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

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector