

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs K Maunder
Headteacher
Gwladys Street Primary and Nursery School
Walton Lane
Liverpool
Merseyside
L4 5RW

Dear Mrs Maunder

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 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 satisfactory with some good features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- On entry to the Nursery, children's creative skills are well below expectations for their age. For example, using basic tools such as scissors and glue spreaders is completely new to most children. Inside the classroom and outdoors well chosen activities capture children's interest so that they are encouraged into energetic, spontaneous play. The creative table attracts children who want to make art. They freely and confidently explore materials, media and processes. The adults allow children plenty of time to pursue their own ideas and provide selective and timely support often acting as

the enabler of independent learning. They cut their own lengths of ribbon, wool and string and choose their preferred colour and size of paper to work on. They ask for media to be made available if it is not out on show. The children look forward to taking their art home taking responsibility to store it carefully until the end of the session. While most activities are attractive to the children, some role play and small world activities are underdeveloped limiting make-believe play. The children make good progress towards the early learning goals for creative development but few reach them by the end of Reception.

- Through Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make steady and satisfactory progress. Most pupils reach broadly average targets for their age by the end of Year 6 as seen in their sketchbook, special work folders and in the subject leader's portfolio.
- The quality and quantity of pupils' work in sketchbooks is variable. They are not using them sufficiently well to gather a personal repertoire of ideas and techniques.
- The subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils have many opportunities to work on collaborative projects which they prize such as making large sculptures in wire. Girls and boys say that they enjoy the subject. They display positive dispositions and attitudes in lessons and when they are given opportunity to work independently, they do so with a sense of purpose and satisfaction.

Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with good features.

- Relationships are good so most pupils are responsive and attentive learners. Pupils' receive helpful, constructive support and guidance throughout lessons as well as on the spot feedback relating to their progress towards the learning objectives. They are encouraged to self evaluate their success.
- There is no formal system in place to help teachers to identify, track and enhance individual pupil progress over time. Samples of pupils work stored in the special work week folders are not annotated or levelled in relation to National Curriculum attainment targets. There is inconsistency in the quality of teachers' evaluative written comments in pupils' sketchbooks. As a result, teachers plan activities without the necessary information to enable them to fully take into account strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance across a range of art and design contexts.
- Teaching does not always achieve sufficient balance in opportunities for pupils to listen, discuss and actively engage in practical activity. As a result, some pupils begin to lose concentration and motivation. Some pupils benefit from team teaching that inspires and motivates them. They enjoy the teachers' energetic, lively delivery using a wide range of creative approaches. These maximise pupil participation and independent learning and contribute to pupils' good progress.

- Pupils are expected to use technical language accurately. Expectations are particularly high in Year 6.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge enabling them to confidently demonstrate or model processes and provide useful tips and steps to success that assist pupils in manipulating media successfully.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The curriculum enables teachers and learners to meet the objectives of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the National Curriculum. The school is developing a themed approach in curriculum planning to enable pupils to make connections between subjects. For example, in topics with a historical focus, pupils study art from the period and make their own art and artefacts in a similar style.
- The school's scheme of work is currently under review with new units of work from a published scheme being woven into the existing programme. This is providing specific guidance for non-specialist staff by exemplifying skills progression and identifying opportunities for regular assessment.
- Enrichment art weeks are much enjoyed by the pupils. Last year, for example, pupils worked collaboratively to create an eye catching large scale painting of the Liverpool skyline in the style of Ben Johnson to celebrate the city's status as European Capital of Culture.
- Pupils are given adequate opportunities to use computer software to explore colour and pattern.
- Visits to places of interest provide opportunities for pupils to draw on location and extend their experiences in the subject. Pupils regularly view collections and exhibitions at the Walker Gallery to develop their knowledge and understanding of artists, designers and craftworkers.
- To extend their experiences in the subject and to promote creativity, pupils are encouraged to enter local art and design competitions. Some have achieved awards and prizes giving them public recognition for their work as well as generating a notable sense of pride in their achievements.
- Pupils with special gifts and talents benefit from enrichment classes with a creative focus led by teaching staff on a Saturday morning.

Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management in art and design are satisfactory.

- The subject leader is relatively new to the role. As a subject specialist she has extensive skills, knowledge and understanding which she uses effectively to guide other staff. She leads the subject with enthusiasm and pride.

- The subject is managed well. Documentation is regularly reviewed, resources are replenished and the subject leader provides helpful guidance for staff on display which is generally of a good standard and enhances the learning environment.
- Non-contact time for monitoring activities is regular and used purposefully for auditing resources and checking curriculum planning to ensure appropriate coverage. However, these have not yet been extended to include observations of teaching and learning or a detailed analysis of standards to inform and improve provision.
- A positive start has been made in collecting a portfolio of pupils' work as evidence of coverage. Levelling the examples as guidance for staff is work in progress.
- The subject leader has identified that pupils benefit from working alongside living artists but currently there are few opportunities. Secure plans are in place to address this in this year's subject action plan.
- Good links are developing with other schools and specialists. For example, some pupils benefit from opportunities to develop their ideas over time using a range of media, supported by an art student from the nearby university.

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

This is good.

- Pupils develop good knowledge and understanding of a broad range of artists, designers and craftspeople from different times and countries and are able to place some of them in their historical context.
- The school's scheme of work specifies opportunities to explore artists' work from different times and countries including contemporary practice.
- Pupils are inspired by works of art from different times and can explain the reasons why. For example, one Year 6 pupil welcomed the study of pop art which he says 'gave us all the chance to experiment with colours in new ways'. A Year 3 pupil effused about a study of Lowry's people which inspired him and his friends 'to try their very best' in creating 'Wirral', their own 'matchstick person' in wire.
- Pupils are developing a good understanding of art history. They are able to refer to individual pieces by their recognised title and talk about them with genuine passion.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- devise systematic procedures for assessing and levelling pupils' work against the National Curriculum attainment targets
- develop the subject leader's role in evaluating pupils' experiences and the standard of their work to improve provision and curriculum innovation

- develop 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