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Dear Sister Moira

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 4 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. Many have limited experiences in using basic tools and engaging in imaginative play. The children make rapid progress towards the early learning goals for creative development. This is because the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is led and managed effectively by a practitioner who knows how young children learn best. The children freely and confidently immerse themselves in creative play discovering, investigating, rehearsing, practising and exploring through enjoyable creative experiences. They make good progress towards the early learning

goals although the majority have not achieved them by the time they move into Year 1. At the end of EYFS the proportion of pupils working at typical expectations is well below local authority and national averages.

- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and the subject has a positive impact in all of the Every Child Matters outcomes for learners. For example, pupils make a positive contribution to the community through the subject by exhibiting their work during the school art festival and inviting their parents in to view it. They develop enterprise skills by costing and making crafts to sell for profit at the Christmas Fair.
- Through Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make steady, sustained progress. Standards are broadly typical in drawing and painting by the end of Key Stage 2. They are below average in other processes mainly because pupils have less frequent practise in for example, printmaking, textiles and 3-dimensional work. The pupils' have limited exposure to a broad range of processes.
- The subject makes a valuable contribution in developing pupils' social and personal skills which are mostly good in art and design lessons.
- The subject provides opportunities for some pupils with learning difficulties and/or disability needs to shine. Through art they are able communicate feely and work independently. This boosts their self-esteem and confidence and contributes to the harmonious and productive atmosphere that enables all pupils to make satisfactory progress and use tools safely in lessons.
- The pupils demonstrate good attitudes and dispositions towards the subject which they regard highly and enjoy. As one pupil commented 'Art is as we see it. We can't get it wrong'.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Examples were seen where pupils chose to express their thoughts and feelings through art following the sudden loss of a revered member of staff.

Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Lessons are efficiently organised and workspaces are managed effectively. The best teaching generates a lively pace incorporating approaches with strong appeal to learners matched to clear objectives.
- Teaching assistants provide appropriate support and guidance for pupils with additional learning needs during the main activity so that they successfully complete tasks.
- Relationships are good and most learners respond positively to the teaching.
- Pupils receive helpful, constructive support and guidance throughout lessons. Teacher use plenary sessions interspersed throughout the lesson to reinforce teaching points and to direct pupils towards improvement.

- Systems for assessment are underdeveloped. As a result, staff are unable to track pupils' development.
- The pupils are developing satisfactory skills in evaluating their own work. They are taught how to comment on their own and each others' work sensitively orally and in writing.

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.
- In the EYFS inside the classroom well chosen activities capture children's interest so that they are encouraged into energetic, spontaneous play. Some are engrossed for long periods of time as they build castles with construction blocks, make rockets from junk, experiment and dance to music, pack for a make-believe holiday or patrol the room as police on the beat. The outdoor space is underdeveloped for creative play.
- The curriculum is currently under review and this has had a positive impact on provision for art and design. The school is developing a themed approach in curriculum planning to enable pupils to make connections between subjects. This is generating more opportunities for pupils to explore art through other subjects and to practise their skills more frequently. All staff have contributed to the overarching curriculum plan.
- The school makes good use of visits to local galleries such as the Walker Gallery to extend pupils' experiences in the subject. Opportunities for pupils to work alongside a living artist are rare but cherished by the pupils. They speak enthusiastically of their experience of working with a professional photographer to celebrate the city's status as European Capital of Culture. They learnt new skills in using a simple disposable camera to capture good quality, very creative images of Liverpool.
- Pupils are given adequate opportunities to use computer software to explore colour and pattern.

Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management in art and design are satisfactory.

- In this small school, staff take on roles for clusters of subjects to ensure that time for monitoring and evaluation is used effectively. Art and design comes under the creative development umbrella and is managed by the deputy headteacher who is a non-specialist but keenly promotes the subject and creativity.
- The subject policy is well informed and recently updated.
- Monitoring activities have centred on curriculum planning. This has rightly been a priority for the school this year as the curriculum has moved away from teaching subjects discreetly. The creative curriculum leader has been diligently tracking coverage of the

subject against National Curriculum objectives to ensure that all requirements are met and that skills are systematically taught. Nonetheless, in monitoring the effectiveness of the subject there is not enough linkage to standards and achievement.

- The school's interior benefits from the varied displays of pupils' work which add a welcome splash of colour to gloomy corners. The school is celebrating the release of funding for a new building. However, the curriculum leader ensures that pupils' art work continues to brighten and add interest to the learning environment.
- Effective links have been developed with gallery educators and the local university to broaden experiences for learners.

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

This is satisfactory.

- Pupils develop satisfactory knowledge and understanding of a limited range of artists, designers and craftspeople from different times, cultures and countries.
- The Art Festival Week provides a valuable opportunity for pupils to make in depth studies of artists, designers and craftworkers. They explore techniques and develop ideas culminating in a finished piece of quality art that is mounted and exhibited tastefully in the school's temporary gallery.
- The pupils revere the quality of their art exhibition depicting art inspired by various painters. One commented that 'We loved every minute of our study of Monet's work'. The pupils' landscapes and seascapes show the influence of the impressionists. Captions written by the pupils convey their feelings as they painted. 'The mood in my picture is happy and peaceful. I hope that it makes you feel happy and peaceful too'.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- devise systematic procedures for assessing and levelling pupils' work over time
- develop the subject leader's role in monitoring and evaluation beyond provision with more linkage to intended impact on achievement and standards, personal development and well-being
- extend the range of processes that pupils are introduced to and taught how to revisit, review and reapply.

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