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Mr D Clough
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Clough

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 03 March 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.

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 pupils reach broadly average targets for their age in all year groups as seen in sketchbooks, work on display and examples in the subject leader's portfolio.
- Most pupils' excel in activities such as the still life unit in Year 5, led by the art specialist teacher, where pupils record from first-hand observation and collect visual information to help them develop their ideas.

- Pupils find it inspiring when working alongside living artists making big art for example, an eye-catching, beautifully constructed paper-mache dragon on exhibition in the hall.
- Some are sufficiently enthused to make art at home with the family and bring it into school to show others. The pupils are independent learners, trusted by staff to retrieve their own tools and materials sensibly.
- Pupils display very positive attitudes and dispositions towards the subject and enjoy it. This contributes to the good progress made in some lessons.
- The quality and quantity of pupils' work in sketchbooks is variable. They are not using them sufficiently well to practise drawing skills and other processes or as a place to gather ideas and techniques to draw upon and use at a later date.
- The subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils have many opportunities to work on collaborative projects which they talk about with a sense of satisfaction and pride.

Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- The school is undergoing a change of approach in the teaching of art and design. For several years, a part-time subject specialist taught all year groups expertly. In the interest of sustainability, the school's leadership and management took the decision to revert to class teachers teaching the subject. However, teachers found themselves out of touch and deskilled in teaching the subject. To boost their confidence and to enable all teachers to rediscover their skills, the subject specialist teacher leads the main teaching very effectively. This is a constructive way to provide teachers with the professional development needed to teach the subject with confidence. However, this coaching approach is not planned well enough to ensure that the class teacher moves beyond observation into partnership teaching with shared, yet supported input.
- Relationships are good so most pupils are responsive and attentive learners. Pupils' receive helpful, constructive support and guidance throughout lessons. They are encouraged to self evaluate their success and comment on others' work.
- Teachers do not assess pupils systematically against the National Curriculum attainment targets. As a result, there is insufficient evidence to pinpoint the progress that individuals and groups make over time or to identify areas of strength and weakness across a range of art and design contexts. As a result, their prior attainment is not fully taken into account in curriculum planning and this has an impact on the progress that they make over time. Pupils with special gifts and talents are identified but do not receive any additional provision.
- Resources are used very effectively for inspiration. For example, before making their own extravagant hats from a wide range of

materials, the pupils in Year 6 looked at images of hats from different times, the work of milliners and some real hats.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The school's scheme of work follows national guidance to ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum. The units are adapted to reflect the school's local distinctiveness and to respond spontaneously to special moments. For example, severe local flooding resulted in the availability of large quantities of plastic water bottles. These were used very creatively within units of work with a 3-D element. A recent heavy fall of snow inspired mixed media collage work showing that teachers are able to improvise.
- Good links are developing between subjects. For example, a unit of work on portraits is taught within the context of Roman history.
- Pupils are strongly encouraged to recycle consumable resources in the spirit of sustaining the environment. They make initial drawings on used envelopes, save backing paper from dismantled displays and treat all of the resources with care. They have a very wide range of interesting materials to choose from and use in their art work.
- Visits to places of interest provide opportunities for pupils to draw on location and extend their experiences in the subject. For example, pupils visit Gloucester Cathedral to gather ideas for the 'Take a seat' unit of work and to learn about the history of its architecture.
- 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 in designing, for example, the winning poster to encourage healthy eating promoted by Gloucester Rugby Club.
- The pupils make art and artefacts for a purpose. Every Year 6 pupil makes a bespoke sculpture to take with them as a lasting memory of primary school. Pupils are currently invited to submit new designs for the school's traditional house system.
- Pupils are given adequate opportunities to use technology to support their learning. They research the work and lives of artists using the internet and use digital photography and computer software for design work. However, the school has identified that the curriculum has not yet been audited to pinpoint where more ICT opportunities could be interwoven into the National Curriculum programme of study.

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 and is a developing leader. She leads the subject with enthusiasm and has quickly aligned her duties to a subject leader's management cycle of planning, monitoring and reviewing.

- She draws upon the subject specialist's extensive skills, knowledge and understanding to enhance her own and is keenly undertaking professional development for example, in visiting other schools to see how the subject is led and managed.
- The subject is managed well. Documentation is regularly reviewed and resources are replenished. Displays are of a good standard and enhance the learning environment. They often contain an interactive element that encourages pupils to look and reflect, such as voting for the most terrifying face in a class display of Roman soldiers.
- Non-contact time for monitoring activities is regular and used purposefully for auditing resources, checking curriculum planning to ensure appropriate coverage and to observe the quality of teaching and learning. These activities have informed a two year development plan with well-chosen activities to move the subject forward.
- As yet no detailed analysis of standards has been undertaken to inform and improve provision.
- A positive start has been made in collecting a portfolio of pupils' work as evidence of coverage.
- Links with other schools and specialists are not yet fully developed. However, the school's leadership and management are committed to developing links with the feeder infant school and local secondary schools. Plans are fully in place to embark on this from an art and design perspective.
- The school is moving in the right direction in strengthening teachers' subject knowledge and depth of understanding about how to enable different learners to make significant progress.

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. The art and design policy explicitly states that pupils will also learn about illustrators, architects, photographers and sculptors.
- Opportunities to explore artists' work from different times and countries including contemporary practice are plentiful.
- Pupils are inspired by works of art and can explain the reasons why.
- Pupils are developing a good understanding of art history. Some 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 assessment procedures to define ways forward as well as to capture the levels pupils have reached
- widen the purpose and use of sketchbooks
- provide more opportunities for pupils to use ICT within the subject
- ensure that subject teaching is of consistently high quality.

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