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Mr R Pownall  
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Dear Mr Pownall

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 29 April 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 good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Pupils are confident learners. They enjoy the subject and achieve well. Standards of work on display and in portfolios are generally above average.
- From broadly typical starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make rapid progress in creative development. Most exceed the early learning goals. Their representational drawing is particularly impressive as seen in examples on display in the classroom. Opportunities for children to draw, paint and make art using a variety

of media are plentiful. Their work contributes to the colourful, stimulating learning environment that promotes creativity.

- Through Key Stages 1 and 2 most pupils continue to make good progress and some make very good progress. In particular 3-dimensional work is often of outstanding quality because of the rich experiences pupils receive working alongside living artists. Ceramic gargoyles 'guarding' the school building and sculptures inspired by studies of natural forms in Year 2 are excellent examples.
- Regular and purposeful use of a sketchbook promotes pupils' drawing skills and encourages them to develop ideas.
- Pupils show satisfactory understanding of the work of artists; mostly male painters from different times and places. In lessons, they are observant and make perceptive, eloquent comments about artists' work. However, their ability to recall and interpret prior knowledge about artists, designers and craftspeople they have studied in the past is underdeveloped.
- From the same starting points pupils work diligently through their working processes. Their ability to explore, improvise and capitalise on the unexpected, for example through mixing media, is more limited.

### Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding of the National Curriculum programme of study lends confidence to their teaching styles which engage pupils and encourage them to work well independently and collaboratively. As a result, most pupils make good progress.
- Relationships are extremely strong. The pupils respond positively to guidance and support and behave impeccably.
- Lessons are planned thoroughly in line with the school's scheme of work. They are well organised and there is a good balance between learning by listening and doing.
- Skilful teaching assistants are deployed effectively. They support learning and provide helpful guidance enabling those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to fully and actively participate. However, activities are generally too similar for pupils with different needs and interests because starting points are generally the same for all pupils who work through processes uniformly. Consequently, options are limited for some pupils who have difficulty making a start and this limits their progress.
- Pupils are guided and encouraged to assess their work themselves. Excellent use is made of electronic visualisers that project and enlarge pupils' work to stimulate learning about how to develop and express criticism constructively and sensitively.
- Pupils' work is regularly assessed against the National Curriculum targets for attainment. Assessments are used for teachers to check that pupils are meeting age-related expectations and to adjust their curriculum planning accordingly.
- Pupils have access to a broad range of technology to explore art and design and to support their learning which they use to good effect.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The curriculum more than meets statutory requirements and the objectives of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum. For example, the school has achieved Artsmark Gold, a national award in recognition of a high level of provision in the arts.
- The curriculum is structured carefully to allow for systematic development of pupils' achievements, personal development and well-being. However, unpredictable opportunities for discovery and challenge are less evident than enable pupils more extensive choice and freedom to push the boundaries of materials, ideas and processes. Taking risks and exploring unfamiliar approaches are rare.
- There are explicit links with other subjects maximising opportunities for pupils to apply their artistic skills and promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Enrichment activities are excellent and broaden pupils' experiences. Arts days and weeks are a regular feature where pupils work collaboratively sometimes in mixed age and ability groups. This adds to pupils' enjoyment and achievement.
- Pupils benefit from visits to local galleries and the extended school activities that often incorporate making art and crafts.
- Art club is run by an art specialist and is revered by the many pupils who attend. There is a plethora of good quality work on display throughout the school created by members of the art club.
- The exceptionally well-developed school grounds as well as the immediate and distant localities are used extensively to develop pupils' drawing skills of observation and expression.
- Partnership with parents is very strong. Parents are responsive to requests for volunteer support in art and design activities and willingly give of their time. They are responsive to invitations to viewings of pupils' work and exhibitions.

## Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management in art and design are good.

- The subject is well led and managed by a committed, diligent and resourceful subject leader. As a non-specialist the subject leader is developing her skills and expertise in leading the subject to good effect.
- The leadership of art, craft and design is strongly focused on developing the quality of provision, raising standards and promoting pupils' personal development in and through the subject.
- Through well established quality assurance activities, the subject leader has a clear understanding of performance in the subject. The subject leader is developing her skills in observing teaching and learning to identify subject strengths and make insightful comment on points for improvement. Pupils' views are taken into account in evaluating the subject's overall effectiveness.

- The school self-evaluation indicates that provision and outcomes in the subject are above average and that pupils make satisfactory progress, in line with inspection judgements.
- The quality and clarity of written subject documentation is impressive. Regular review keeps the paperwork fresh ensuring that it reflects current practice. For example, the school's scheme of work is a working document that is adapted and changed in response to developments in the subject and other aspects of the curriculum.
- The subject leader benefits from strong support from the leadership team who value and promote the subject ensuring that it is well resourced.

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

This is satisfactory.

- The school's scheme of work specifies opportunities to explore artists' work from different times and countries including contemporary practice. However, there is insufficient balance in studies of male and female artists and the range of disciplines studied.
- Pupils are inspired by works of art from different times in lessons and can explain the reasons why. For example, one Year 6 pupil quickly spotted that a series of paintings by Deigo Rivira were repetitions of the first from different viewpoints; he was intrigued and his curiosity stimulated.
- Pupils are able to work in the style of artists they study with slight variation on a theme. They have less opportunity to think like artists to generate something original.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- build on the good quality of objective-led planning by promoting creativity and capitalising on the unexpected.

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