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Mrs V Fitzpatrick
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Dear Mrs Fitzpatrick

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 28 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 satisfactory with some good features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- On entry to the Nursery, children's creative skills are generally below expectations for their age. The children are very responsive and many immerse themselves in creative and purposeful play. For example, a group in Reception worked together energetically to create a giant beanstalk for an imaginary giant and persevered to find effective ways of covering the stalk in green paper. They demonstrate good personal skills such as sharing resources and

helping each other. Adults guide children in exploring a range of media and materials as well as introducing them to new skills so that children learn to manipulate materials and tools confidently. However, there is less opportunity for children to learn through independent discovery and make their own choices and decisions. Most children make good progress to reach or exceed the early learning goals 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 as seen in past and present examples of work.
- The quality and quantity of pupils' work in sketchbooks is variable. The purpose of the sketchbook is not yet clearly defined. As a result, the quality of entries in them is patchy and not always effective in stimulating or supporting the artistic process.
- The subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being, improving their skills in working independently and with others.
- Girls and boys say that they enjoy the subject. They display positive dispositions and attitudes in lessons and when they are given opportunity to freely explore ideas, they do so with gusto, thriving in developing innovative ways to use materials.
- Pupils work safely and treat resources with care. They learn how to use tools safely from an early age.

Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

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

- Relationships between staff and pupils are good and as a result, pupils are responsive, attentive learners.
- Pupils receive helpful, constructive support and guidance throughout lessons as well as feedback relating to their progress towards the learning objectives.
- Pupils are encouraged to self-evaluate their success and voice their opinions, developing their eloquence in appraising and appreciating their own and others' work.
- Discrete art and design lessons are carefully planned by teaching staff in line with the school's scheme of work and delivered effectively by a teaching assistant. This leads to some variation in quality because not all teachers allow for adaptation during lessons in response to pupils' needs, interests and ideas. Where the autonomy of support staff is encouraged, on the spot adjustments are made to provide just the right level of challenge and all pupils thrive as a result.
- Pupils' work is assessed and 'levelled' regularly throughout the year against the National Curriculum attainment targets. A new assessment system is in the early stages of development providing the means to track pupils' progress over time. However, there is no system in place to involve the subject leader and other teachers and support staff in moderating judgements to ensure precision and consistency.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory with good features.

- The curriculum enables teachers and learners to meet the objectives of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the National Curriculum successfully. The scheme of work is currently under review to improve the balance and progression of skills.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage teachers plan a wide range of activities to promote creativity inside the classroom. However, outdoor space is underused as an environment to explore creative activities and extend children's experiences.
- Each unit of work is evaluated and the staff capitalise on opportunities to link art and design with other subjects. For example, evidence shared during the visit suggested that this has had an impact on raising standards in science in Year 6 where pupils use art skills in revision activities. In topics with a historical focus, pupils study art from the period and make their own art and artefacts in a similar style.
- Enrichment art days are much enjoyed by the pupils. Last year, for example, pupils worked collaboratively on a range of open-ended art activities around the theme 'Happiness'. Many had the added bonus of working alongside family members who were invited to join them. These valuable opportunities to work with others enabled the pupils to develop creativity, work harmoniously and share ideas in lessons. As one pupil commented to another 'It was a good idea of yours that I should colour in my pattern. Thank you!'
- Pupils are given regular opportunities to use computer software to explore colour, pattern and shape and are exposed to a wide range of artists, designers and craftspeople through the internet.
- Visits to places of interest, such as places of worship, provide opportunities for pupils to draw on location and extend their experiences in the subject.
- Visits to the Whitworth Gallery and Manchester Gallery are regular especially in Key Stage 2. An excellent link has developed with the Manchester Museum. Over time pupils have been involved in the 'Museum of Me' project enabling them to work alongside living artists creating their own artefacts to reflect their lives and learning how to set up an exhibition complete with guided tours for adults. Images of the pupils at work capture their awe and wonder, engagement and enjoyment through their participation.

Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management in art and design are satisfactory.

- The subject has a high profile in the school and you value it as a powerful means of communication. This year, working alongside a graphic designer pupils, parents, staff and governors contributed their ideas and vision for the school in words, images and statements. A permanent record created by the artist takes pride of

place in a covered walkway as a lasting reminder of the direction the school is taking.

- The non-specialist subject leader is a strong supporter of the subject and leads enthusiastically using her good knowledge and understanding to guide others in curriculum planning.
- The subject is managed satisfactorily. Strengths and areas for future development have been identified through an accurate audit of provision. Resources are replenished regularly. Display is generally of a good standard and enhances the learning environment.
- Opportunities for professional development are too limited, especially for the subject leader and support staff.
- Self review is regular, for example, curriculum coverage is monitored through sampling of teachers' planning. However monitoring activities have not yet been extended to include observations of teaching and learning or a detailed analysis of standards to inform and improve provision.
- Good links with parents and outside agencies already contribute to the quality of provision, achievements and well-being of learners and others are planned.
- There are some clearly emerging strengths in aspects of leadership and management ensuring that the school is well placed to move the subject forward.

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 broad range of artists, designers and craftspeople from different times and countries.
- The school's scheme of work specifies opportunities to explore artists' work from different times and countries including contemporary practice. The pupils mimic the approaches used by artists rather than exploiting what they learn from their work for their own purposes.
- Plans are in place to develop the range of living artists that work directly with pupils as this is when pupils' creativity shines through.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- extend the subject leader's role in evaluating pupils' experiences and the standard of their work in order to inform improvement and target innovation
- include moderation in the assessment process to ensure accuracy and consistency
- develop pupils' use of sketchbooks to stimulate and support the artistic process.

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