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01 May 2009

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Dear Miss Robinson

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and Design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 1 May 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: an interview with you as both head teacher and subject coordinator, discussions with pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and short observations of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of art and design was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- On entry to Early Years Foundation Stage children's creative skills are generally below expectations for their age. Carefully chosen activities capture children's interest and enjoyment. They experience a satisfactory range of materials and successfully learn to manipulate basic tools such as scissors, glue and paint brushes. By the time they enter Key Stage 1 pupils have made satisfactory progress.

- Throughout Key Stage 1 and 2, the majority of pupils make steady and satisfactory progress. Most pupils reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6, and some attain highly; as seen in lesson observations, the subject leader's portfolio, wide ranging photographic evidence and samples of past work. Sensitive support provided individually for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to make good progress in the subject.
- Assessment of pupils work is ongoing; overall objectives for learning and activities build on previous work and influence future planning. However, much assessment is informal so opportunities are missed to make sure that work is always matched to pupils' abilities. Longer-term and medium-term plans do not always offer sufficient guidance on how pupils of differing abilities can be provided for and challenged to refine their skills or consolidate their understanding.
- Although all pupils plan and develop their work, they do not yet use sketch books so opportunities for them to develop ideas further, capture observations, experiment, practice skills, reflect, improve the quality or see the progression in their work are missed.
- Pupils' attitudes in lessons are exemplary and they work with a sense of purpose and satisfaction. They are proud of their work and all achievements are celebrated. Pupils express their ideas confidently; they work together well, and are very supportive of each other and of their work.

Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some strengths.

- All lessons are characterised by excellent relationships between pupils and adults and pupils together, and behaviour is exemplary. In the Early Years Foundation Stage this gives children the confidence to communicate their own ideas and to make choices. However these choices are sometimes limited by the range of opportunities on offer for children who display different skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers' planning ensures that lessons provide adequate coverage of the art and design curriculum and link effectively to other subjects such as literacy and numeracy and design technology. Skills and techniques are taught rigorously to provide a secure grounding for pupils in the subject. However lessons are not always differentiated enough to ensure those skills are always built upon.
- Where teaching is good, teachers' good subject knowledge, enthusiasm and high expectations assure that pupils enjoy their work, make good progress and achieve well. In the best lessons pupils are provided with opportunities to reflect thoughtfully on their work, discuss qualities of their work with their peers, offer advice and consider how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils have many opportunities to work with others, across key-stages and on collaborative projects such as the Chinese collage that utilise a wide range of media, textures and styles.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving.

- The curriculum has improved significantly in recent years due to the focus of the subject coordinator on improving pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject and increasing the range of opportunities available.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage experiences are effectively planned with links between children's creative development and other areas of learning and there is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-led tasks that children clearly enjoy.
- The school uses the QCA curriculum modules as a skeleton for long-term planning and these are adapted satisfactorily to meet the overall needs and interests of pupils.
- Pupils learn to manipulate a satisfactory range of materials, media and tools. They experience working in 2D, and 3D and are increasingly utilising information, communication technology such as digital photography and media packages like colour-magic to develop their ideas and present their work.
- The planned opportunities to learn the language of art, such as tone and colour, or the qualities of different types of paint, enable pupils to build their knowledge and skills progressively in most respects.
- A range of opportunities to develop ideas from imagination, memory, observation, provides pupils with a sound foundation in the subject. However too many teacher-initiated whole class activities with similar expected end points, restrict pupils opportunities to develop further their creativity and independence skills. The school is aware of this and has embarked upon an innovative small-school creativity cluster. While it is too early to evaluate the impact, this initiative appropriately focuses on pooling resources and expertise. It also aims to provide pupils with many more opportunities to benefit from a wider range of first-hand experiences, develop ideas and work with and learn from others in the broader community.
- The subject is satisfactorily enriched through themed activities in classes, some visits outside of school and through out-of school-clubs which children say they thoroughly enjoy. They have some opportunities to work with local artists and craftworkers, planning with them and learning from them. Pupils recall these experiences with great enthusiasm.
- All pupils' achievements in art, craft and design are celebrated as evidenced in the diverse and interesting range of displays around the school. Parents and grandparents are encouraged to come to school regularly to see their children's achievements.
- Limited opportunities have been provided for children to present their work to a wider audience, Nevertheless, some children's work has been chosen to be the design for a Member of Parliament's Christmas card and pupils' work is displayed annually in the local village hall.

Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving.

- The subject co-ordinator has worked diligently to raise standards by improving the quality of provision in the subject.
- Plans are well on the way for a great move forward in the curriculum that aim to build on the strengths already in place. These include the good focus on pupils' development of skills, their enthusiasm and enjoyment, their increasing ability to evaluate their work, and the growing range of experiences on offer that pupils say they enjoy; and evident in lessons observed.
- The coordinator is very clear about the strengths and areas for improvement and is working to improve these in a planned and measured way. The building blocks for a good or even outstanding curriculum in art, craft and design are in place and actions planned for the coming year are well on the way to the delivery stage.
- However forms of monitoring, like lesson observation and regular, systematic formal assessment are underused in evaluating the impact of provision on the development of pupils' subject skills, knowledge and understanding, or creativity.
- The subject leader works well with other staff to share and develop resources and ideas for teaching. She provides support and training to them, helping to build their confidence, knowledge and skills. Opportunities to learn from expert teachers are also developing for example, staff and pupils working with teachers with expertise in weaving and clay. Links with outside organisations/partner schools are developing well but these have not yet had time to impact on overall standards in art, craft and design.

Subject issue: how effectively do connections to the work of other artists, craftworkers and designers promotes pupils' own creativity?

This is satisfactory.

- Pupils' promotion of creativity is satisfactorily promoted through connections with, and knowledge and understanding of other artists, designers and craftspeople including some from the local area and from different countries and cultures.
- The most creative work includes pupils learning from other artists and producing their own original art, for example, their self- portraits after studying portraits by artists such as Rembrandt and Chuck Close and their paintings in the style of Rousseau. These show wide variation in the way pupils have applied their knowledge and understanding of artists work. In their work in the style of Rousseau, all used the same basic palette of colours. However, some compositions show connection to the artist in different ways; a few focused on a fluidity of the medium used whilst others on the detail of landscape.
- Opportunities to meet with local contemporary arts and crafts specialists are developing and pupils have benefited greatly from artists' visits to school and visits to craftworkers' own working environments such as the Ropewalk.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- evaluate pupils' learning systematically and regularly in order to monitor the impact of provision and inform improvement in the subject
- provide more varied starting points for different pupils in order to promote their individual progress in the subject
- develop the use of sketch books
- enrich the creative aspects of the curriculum by continuing to develop links to other schools, visits to galleries and links with artists and contemporary art and craft-based practitioners, including those from a wider range of cultures.

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

Margaret Farrow
Her Majesty's Inspector