

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045  
F 020 7421 6855  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



08 July 2009

Mr D Murgett  
Headteacher  
Holmfirth Junior Infant and Nursery School  
Cartworth Road  
Holmfirth  
West Yorkshire  
HD9 2RG

Dear Mr Murgett

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 7 July 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 headteacher, subject coordinator senior teachers and the chair of governors; discussions with pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observations of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of art and design was judged to be good with outstanding features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- On entry into the Foundation stage, children's creative skills are broadly typical of their age. A wide and exciting range of opportunities enable children to freely and confidently explore and develop their creativity, skills, knowledge and understanding of materials, media and processes. They learn about colour, texture, form, shape and space in two and three dimensions and learn to manage the tools of artists. For example, the children are able to manipulate scissors, paint brushes,

rollers and markers of many kinds, and make choices about materials they would like to use.

- Through a sensitive and perceptive balance of teacher-initiated and child-led activities children are able to pursue their own ideas whilst at the same time developing the skills and knowledge that will be built upon as they move through the school. Consequently they make good progress in their learning and by the time they enter Key Stage 1 their creative development is also good.
- Pupils continue to make good progress throughout Key Stage 1 and 2 and by the time they leave for secondary school they have attained standards that are above and sometimes well above average. Evidence from lesson observations, assessments, pupils' e-portfolios, work in classrooms, on corridors and photographs, show just how wide an array of experiences is provided to pupils and how well pupils achieve in the subject.
- Assessment of pupils work is regular and meticulous and links well to the programmes of study for each key stage as well as to long, medium and short-term planning. Cross-curricular links to subjects such as literacy through the Power of Reading project and music are strong and promote higher achievement in these subject areas as well as adding a powerful stimulus to pupils' creativity and thinking skills. For example in older classes pupils use descriptive prose and poetry alongside their art, seamlessly making links to the emotions portrayed within the landscapes they have produced.
- Pupils in Year 2 and Year 5 have been trialling sketchbooks this year and this is beginning to help them to develop their ideas, practice their skills and refine their work. The school is extending their use to pupils across the school from the autumn term.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. The successful focus on developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence through the creative and expressive arts is a strength. Pupils work well together; they are cooperative and supportive of one another, sharing and developing ideas as well as resources and equipment. They have many opportunities to work on collaborative projects which they prize such as the Holmfirth Tiger. Pupils say they particularly enjoy the art weeks and the many local artists, designers and craftworkers who visit the school.

## Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

Teaching and learning is at least good and some is outstanding.

- Staff are highly motivated and their good subject knowledge, together with very good relationships between themselves and pupils ensures that pupils are ready and willing to take an active part in their lessons, develop their ideas and make good progress in their learning.
- Lessons are carefully prepared to meet the specific learning objectives for each session. Generally these build well on pupils' prior learning. However, on occasions, the good assessment information teachers have about their pupils' progress is not always used well enough to make sure teaching is always matched to the needs of individual

pupils. This happens when whole class activities with similar expected end points restrict pupils' opportunities to develop further their creativity and independence skills.

- In all lessons, pupils are encouraged to develop the language of art, to talk about their work, what it means to them, how it relates to what they have been taught and how to improve their practice.
- The use of local artists, designers and craftworkers in lessons is also a strength. They model techniques, explore ideas and challenge pupils to think beyond the usual.
- Opportunities for pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers are developing well. They are becoming skilled in matching their outcomes to the lesson's learning objectives. These are shared with pupils at the beginning of every lesson and are regularly referred to as lessons progress; this helps pupils to reflect on how well they are doing.
- Opportunities to work with pupils from local primary and secondary schools through projects such as the 'Beyond Appearances' project and their involvement in the 'Tiger' project further promote their confidence and skills. The range of pupils' work is impressive, although opportunities to work from first hand experiences in the outside environment are more limited.
- The collective art, craft and design experiences provided during pupils time in school encourages them to begin to think and act like artists; ask questions and seek to explore artists and styles for them selves. They develop skills and attitudes that prepare them well for the next phase of their education.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding.

- Due to the range of and diversity of the curriculum and the improvements made, the school rightly judges it outstanding. Art, craft and design link across all areas of the curriculum, particularly literacy, the performing arts including music and each add value to the other.
- The curriculum is designed around the National Curriculum and the QCA curriculum modules. There is flexibility within this framework so that pupils can extend their creativity and learning alongside these planned opportunities that promote progression of pupils' skill development, knowledge and understanding. Although in a few lessons this does not yet happen well enough.
- The curriculum ensures that all statutory requirements are fully met and enables coherent assessment and review of pupils' progress.
- The school's focus on developing Information and Communication across the school further promotes pupils high levels of enjoyment and achievement in the subject. They are becoming accomplished users of specialist equipment such as digital cameras and software packages and these add to the range and quality of pupils work. Their current work on the virtual learning environment (VLE) is adding an exciting element and will further promote the strong and effective partnership with parents.

- A vast number of regular visitors and events such as themed arts weeks, alongside pupils' contribution to the Holmfirth Arts Festival and visits to local galleries, successfully enrich the curriculum and stimulate further pupils' interest, excitement and creativity.
- The school actively seeks out local artists, craftspeople and designers with whom children can work. This helps to build a strong sense of belonging to the local community as well as broadening pupils' knowledge and understanding by learning well from local experts alongside the internationally recognised artists whom they study.
- All pupils' achievements in art, craft and design are celebrated as evidenced in the diverse and interesting range of displays around the school. They proudly display their work annually in the tourist information centre and a local tennis club during the Holmfirth Arts Festival. Some pupils have the opportunity to work like artists in the Huddersfield Art Gallery and display the outcomes of their efforts for all to see.

## Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management are good.

- Art, craft and design is afforded a high status in the school as are all the expressive arts and the subject is well resourced. There is a passion and commitment from all staff to provide pupils with the best possible experiences. This is evidenced by the high quality displays of pupils' art, craft and design work that fill all of the spaces in the school.
- The school uses self-evaluation and reflection very effectively and is becoming increasingly successful on the journey to excellence in this subject.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the subject is good and improving. This includes regular scrutiny of teachers' planning, lesson observations, annotation and moderation of pupils' work alongside detailed and regular formal assessments. Pupils' progress is consequently tracked tenaciously in order to celebrate their achievements and plan the next steps in their learning.
- The subject coordinator strives to continually improve processes to ensure that all pupils can make the most of their art experiences in school. For example from September 2009 she is extending the already detailed assessment of pupils' work to include moderation of specific skills at the beginning and end of each year.
- The school regularly seeks the views of children in the assessment of the impact of the subject area through analysis of responses to pupils' questionnaires; targets for improvement are set against these.
- The subject leader has secured significant resources to coach, train and support teachers to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject following a thorough audit of teachers' strengths and weaknesses. As a result all staff keenly utilise these well-honed skills to promote pupils' learning. They are well supported by the range of experts who visit the school.

- Strong links have been developed with local secondary school primary schools in the Holm Valley pyramid to share experiences and enable pupils to work with others in the wider school community.
- Staff go out of their way to help children to understand and celebrate differences and make sure that all pupils are included and can access and enjoy this subject. The range and diversity of opportunities assures that boys and girls are able to enjoy and achieve equally well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported sensitively by well-trained and well-deployed teaching assistants and parent-helpers and consequently they too make good progress. Gifted and talented pupils are recognised and their skills extended through additional after school clubs and special events.

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

This is good overall.

- Opportunities to meet with and work alongside local contemporary arts and crafts specialists are very good and pupils have benefited greatly from their visits to school for specific projects and their regular visits to individual lessons.
- Pupils are provided with many opportunities to learn from internationally renowned artists and producing their own original art. For example, portraits and patterns developed in the style of Warhol and their colourful and individual responses to the work of Paul Klee and Henri Matisse. Following a visit to the local National Sculpture Park, pupils devised and made a very interesting and individual sculpture trail within their extensive school grounds.
- Pupils have some opportunities to visit galleries beyond their local communities but these are limited due to the extensive costs involved. However, they have travelled as far afield as Manchester to use the museum's Egyptian artefacts as a stimulus for their art work alongside the history curriculum.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- extend opportunities for pupils to explore and develop their observational art outside the classroom
- develop the role of sketchbooks
- make sure the good assessment information is always used in teachers' planning so that all children can be stretched to achieve the best they can.

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