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Dear Mrs Broadhurst

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 June 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.

- On entry to the Reception class, children's creative skills are generally below expectations for their age. Good provision, with wide-ranging opportunities for imaginative play and creative experiences, ensures their speedy progress. By the time they move into Year 1, most children meet or exceed expectations.
- Through Key Stages 1 and 2, the school's detailed tracking information shows that pupils continue to make good progress. In Year 1 for example, pupils' representational drawings of people and animals are detailed and well-proportioned showing their developing understanding

of composition and proportion. Uninhibited by large paper size, pupils draw their own outlines of dragons confidently and use these to explore printing using a range of materials to replicate the texture of scales on a dragon. By the end of Key Stage 1 at least a quarter of pupils are working above expectations.

- A similar picture emerges in Key Stage 2 where average to above average standards are sustained. Pupils control materials effectively and work through processes successfully. Work on display shows their success in layering and mixing media to good effect.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the work of European artists, designers and craftspeople from different times but are more limited in their experience and knowledge of cultural styles and influences across the globe.
- Although pupils are innovative through their use of 2D, 3D and mixed media and a variety of scale, the work in their sketchbooks shows a lack of variety in drawing activities such as speed drawing, annotated sketches, thumbnail sketches and observational drawing from different angles. This is because there is not yet an agreed whole school approach to pupils' use of sketchbooks.
- The subject makes a very valuable contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being improving their skills in working independently and with others. In Year 6 for example, pupils work extremely capably and effectively in pairs and groups organising their own workspaces and choosing their preferred materials. They support each other sensitively and appreciate others' ideas.
- 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. For example, in a Year 3 study of the rainforest, a study of Rousseau's work inspires pupils to explore foliage in a variety of ways using washes, papers, pens, inks.
- 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 good with some outstanding features.

- In Reception, teaching is good because the leading teachers know how young children learn best. Well-chosen experiences that stimulate the senses and fire the imagination, promote children's creative development. For example, children were rapturous in their responses to the beauty of butterfly wings introduced to them in interesting and varied ways using both technology and real examples borrowed from a museum. Later some children were inspired to create original patterns skilfully using pastels and chalks. Skills are taught effectively and children are prompted to talk about their ideas and feelings as they work.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are extremely good and, as a result, pupils are responsive, attentive and confident learners.
- Pupils receive helpful, constructive support and guidance throughout lessons as well as feedback relating to their progress towards the learning objectives. Sometimes adults' well-intentioned and helpful

guidance or instruction is too prolonged when pupils want to press on with practical work or immerse themselves in uninterrupted activity.

- Pupils are expertly encouraged to self-evaluate their success and convey their ideas. Through the subject pupils are developing competency in speaking articulately about their ideas and feelings.
- Teachers use assessment information effectively in the curriculum planning that takes pupils' prior learning fully into account.
- 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 through the levels of attainment over time.
- A system to record the distinctive characteristics of pupils' personalities is currently being developed and shared with pupils. This helps them to understand, for example, the areas that they need to work on to develop their creative skills.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage the attractive, stimulating environment promotes curiosity and exploration. There are plentiful opportunities for them to draw, paint, make art and immerse themselves in imaginative play. The outdoor space is limited and the activities on offer outside to promote creative development are too similar to those available inside the classroom.
- The curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 more than meets requirements providing opportunities for pupils to learn new skills and developing, deepening and applying existing skills.
- Staff capitalise on opportunities to link art and design with other subjects especially in English, history and geography.
- Enrichment weeks are much enjoyed by the pupils. A very successful environmental week generated opportunities for pupils to work outdoors on large scale sculptures weaving recycled plastic bags through chicken wire structures to create a sculpture trail. A full scale dragon lies asleep under a canopy of trees whilst insects, flowers and a life sized human figure greet parents as they collect their children from school. The sculptures generate much interest in the subject and pupils' achievements. Some parents are also involved in the theme weeks, keen to come in and assist with creative activities. These valuable opportunities to work with others enable the pupils to develop propensity towards creativity developing their skills in teamwork. Plans are firmly in place to develop this approach as a regular weekly session next term.
- Pupils have opportunities to work alongside living artists and art club is popular.
- Pupils benefit from teachers' use of technology that provides a strong visual dimension and sources of inspiration. However, pupils' use of information and communication technology to investigate shape, colour and pattern or to manipulate digital images, while adequate, remains limited.
- Pupils of all abilities are well supported by the curriculum. Those with special gifts and talents from all age groups come together to benefit

from master classes led by an art specialist. Here they develop their skills and work outside their comfort zone with high levels of expert support and advice.

Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management in art and design are good with some outstanding features.

- The subject leader is a non-specialist but a huge enthusiast of the subject. She communicates her vision for the subject convincingly, inspiring colleagues, especially those lacking confidence in their own skills, to try new approaches and techniques. She uses her good knowledge and understanding of the curriculum to guide others in their planning.
- The subject is managed effectively. Strengths and areas for future development have been identified through an accurate audit of provision. Resources are replenished regularly. Good quality displays of pupils' work enhance the inviting learning environment.
- Self review is regular, for example, curriculum coverage is monitored through sampling of teachers' planning and discussions with staff and pupils which is used to inform and improve provision. However monitoring activities are limited by a whole school cyclical approach to subject review restricting the frequency of lesson observations to once in three years.
- Good links with parents contribute to the quality of provision, achievements and well-being of learners. Links with other organisations such as partnership schools are developing satisfactorily.
- 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 good.

- Pupils develop good knowledge and understanding of European artists, designers and craftspeople from different times and countries. Their appreciation of artists from other parts of the globe is underdeveloped.
- Connections with the work of artists are effective in promoting their creativity. For example, Year 6 pupils were inspired by the work of Georgia O'Keeffe taking her use of colour, tone and texture into account in developing their own work. Using flowers and skulls as the starting point, pupils chose their own scale and preferred media to develop their initial drawings on base boards that they had made themselves. Outcomes were extremely original some depicting whole images, others magnifying one small part of the initial drawing to good effect. The pupils worked harmoniously in pairs, discussing and sharing their ideas showing innovation and confidence in taking risks.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- develop pupils' use of sketchbooks to stimulate and support the artistic process
- develop the cultural aspect of the curriculum to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of art, craft and design from a broader range of countries and 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

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector