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7 October 2009

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Dear Mrs Connor

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art, craft and design

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 30 September, to look at work in art, craft 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 pupils learn how to draw confidently and creatively.

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, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of art, craft and design is satisfactory.

Achievement in art, craft and design

Achievement in art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- The children's creative development is below average on entry to the Reception class. They make good progress, so that the majority achieve the levels expected by the time they join Year 1. The children enjoy responding visually to their experiences. They learn well how to explore processes and think creatively when developing their work.

- The progress made by older pupils is slower but is satisfactory and standards are average by the end of Year 6. Pupils continue to enjoy the subject, as is shown by their positive attitudes to learning, good behaviour and the care they take with equipment.
- They make good progress in exploring the properties of materials, such as different types of paint and mixed-media. They use sketchbooks effectively to record their experiments with different materials.
- The pupils' progress is less assured in developing and refining their work toward personal responses. This is because they are not always clear enough about the characteristics of successful work to help them decide how to improve. Girls sustain their work more independently and reach higher standards than boys overall.
- The pupils make good progress in understanding how elements of the visual language, such as line and colour, can be used to record what they see. They do less well in learning to use the same language to explore and express mood or emotion.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

The quality of teaching of art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- Teachers have good class management skills and lessons are structured well. They are skilled at organising resources and ensuring the pupils take responsibility for equipment.
- Activities in lessons and over time are planned well to ensure overall progression in learning, addressing age-related expectations. Teachers have worked hard in recent years to improve the way they establish each pupil's attainment level. In the Reception class, this information is used well to provide individual challenge. However, for older pupils, activities are not as well tailored to meet pupils' differing needs or as effective in promoting their individual creativity.
- The teachers and teaching assistants work well together, especially to include the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language. This means that these pupils make progress in line with their peers.
- Demonstrations of technique and introductions to artists' work are rightly a regular feature of lessons. Some teachers effectively communicate the essential aspects of practical tasks or artists' work. On other occasions, this is not the case and pupils do not fully understand the technique used or how they might build on the work of the artists encountered so as to develop their own work.
- Feedback to pupils is regular both in lessons and through marking in sketchbooks. Some marking is of high quality but there is a lack of consistency in the way that pupils are expected to respond to the comments made.

- Classroom environments are orderly. They reflect the themes being studied, although opportunities are missed to model high expectations in key areas of learning.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

The quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- The curriculum in the Reception year is planned well to ensure creative development links effectively with other areas of children's learning.
- The curriculum for older pupils includes a good range of materials and techniques for work in two dimensions, including the use of computers. The pupils gain some experiences of work in three dimensions but these are less comprehensive.
- There are good opportunities to study different genres, like landscape or portrait, through interesting themes. These have been sensibly adapted to appeal to boys as well as to girls.
- Good steps have been taken in recent years to develop links between the subject and other curriculum areas. These strengthen subject learning by providing meaningful contexts. For example, figure drawing as part of a theme on the Second World War involves Year 6 pupils in learning about the underground shelter drawings of Henry Moore.
- Regular reference to established artists' work successfully reinforces the value of learning from others. The pupils have some opportunities to see artists' work first hand, for example in arts week, but these occasions are not extensive enough to model the creative process clearly. Too little of the work they learn about is by female artists.
- The curriculum contains satisfactory reference to the local area. For example, Year 3 pupils study public sculpture in the town before producing their own design ideas.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

The effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- Well motivated leadership of the subject has had a positive impact on the curriculum and on planning for progression in learning, and has the capacity to go further.
- The development of the subject is linked well with that of the school as a whole and school-wide aims are reflected in those for the subject.
- Effective communication with her colleagues enables the subject leader to take account of their views on the quality of provision, to provide training where needed and to manage resources efficiently.
- A good range of monitoring is carried out to check the progress made by pupils and find areas of provision needing improvement. The priorities identified are largely accurate; for example, that teachers should make

more use of assessment information to plan lessons. However, two factors are slowing progress: some of the actions intended to bring about change are not planned in enough detail and it is not always clear how the impact on pupils will be checked.

- Some good links are made with external partners to enhance provision. These include connections with a local art society, although there is scope to broaden these, in order to enrich pupils' experiences of creative activity in the area.

Subject issue: How effectively do pupils learn to draw confidently and creatively?

The extent to which pupils learn to draw confidently and creatively is satisfactory.

- The pupils make good progress in drawing from observation. Younger pupils progress well in working from memory and imagination, although this is not sustained as they get older.
- They have good opportunities to draw with different materials and are able to transfer skills learnt, for example with a pencil, into painting.
- The pupils draw regularly in projects, so that they understand the value of drawing through using it in different contexts. Teachers emphasise the value of drawing as a basic creative skill, so that pupils value it too.
- Some lessons involve skilful modelling of drawing by teachers, as seen when a Year 1 class was taught to draw from fossils. The activities are planned well to take account of pupils' varying degrees of confidence but this is not always the case.
- The pupils' use of drawing to develop and refine ideas is an area of relative weakness, especially for the boys, and reflects what is found in the pupils' work overall.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving progress in lessons by:
 - making sure activities are better matched to pupils' individual needs
 - exemplifying more clearly the features of successful work
 - encouraging pupils, notably the boys, to be more independent when evaluating their work and developing their creativity
- broadening the curriculum by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to work in three dimensions
 - including more experience of artists, including women, demonstrating creative processes at first hand
- quickening the pace of subject development by:
 - making sure all the steps to bring about improvement are planned in detail and their impact on pupils checked in ways which are measurable.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop art, craft 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

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector