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Mrs S Meckiff  
Headteacher  
Warren Road Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Meckiff

Ofsted survey inspection programme – art, craft and design

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 24 September 2009, 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 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 documents, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

Achievement in art, craft and design is good

- Children's creative development in the Reception Year is good. From average attainment on entry, they make good progress and enjoy their learning. A good number exceed the expected level by the time they start Year 1.
- Progress continues to be good for older pupils so that they achieve above average standards by the end of Year 6. Boys and girls make equally good progress and enjoy the subject in equal measure.

- Pupils progress well in learning to manipulate materials, for example collage and mixed media. They are more confident when using two- rather than three-dimensional processes, reflecting an emphasis on two-dimensional work in their curriculum experiences.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons. They work cooperatively together and show maturity when using materials and equipment. Some of the best quality work is produced through collaborative pieces which provide testimony to their good social development.
- The pupils' work shows a good level of independence. They exploit opportunities to develop personal responses to starting points. Some highly individual work is produced, often recognised by success in the many competitions and exhibitions they enter. However, on occasion pupils are not clear enough about the features of successful work to help them evaluate their own progress and decide how to improve.
- Learning about the work of other artists makes a good impact on the pupils. They develop a good understanding of key aspects of the work studied and value opportunities to work with living artists and to visit galleries and museums to see work first-hand.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

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

- The teachers and other staff are well motivated and teach the subject enthusiastically. They provide a good range of additional subject-related activities such as clubs or collaborative projects like 'The Big Draw'.
- Lessons are structured very well and teachers have good skills in managing complex activities. They are not afraid to use potentially messy materials. They use the learning environment well so that rooms are re-arranged for activities or pupils are taken to work in other locations.
- Planning is good because the progress of classes and individuals is monitored well. Information about each pupil is transferred effectively as they move up through year groups to ensure sustained challenge.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge overall and a significant number of classes receive teaching from a specialist teacher. However, in some lessons progress is slowed because tasks are not chosen well to enable learning objectives to be met and/or the criteria for successful work are not made clear enough to pupils.
- Good steps are taken to give pupils direct experience of artists' work or of artists at work. Regular reference to the work of other artists from Reception onwards ensures pupils make good progress in learning to analyse the work of others and make effective use of the outcomes.
- Individual support for pupils is good in lessons because each is well-known. This includes pupils with special educational needs so they too make good progress. Teachers use questioning well to move pupils on, although some questions are not tailored well enough to each pupil's

attainment level. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to learning, especially when deployed to support groups of pupils.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- The curriculum contributes much to the pupils' enjoyment of the subject. They like the variety of activities offered and comment upon the subject as a distinctive feature of their learning. This is evident in the copious displays in school and in the impact made on the local community through work shown in local galleries.
- Progression in the pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding is planned well. They experience a good variety of genres, processes and starting points to sustain their interest. The pupils usefully re-visit learning to reinforce and develop it. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, pupils used drawing skills acquired in the Reception Year but developed them further when making self-portraits.
- The curriculum is adapted effectively over time where weaknesses are found or further opportunities emerge. Three-dimensional work was identified last year as requiring more emphasis and increased opportunities have been incorporated into schemes of work.
- Useful links are developing between the subject and other curriculum areas. Pupils are enjoying these and see them as logical, for example, using pattern making to explore mathematics.
- The curriculum is enriched well by clubs and extra activities. There is a regular stream of work for competitions and many pupils spend considerable time on subject study outside lessons.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

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

- The subject leader is outstanding in her commitment to the subject. She shares her enthusiasm well with her colleagues and models effective approaches through her own teaching.
- She provides very good support for other staff. Good communication with different year teams in this large school ensures consistency in curriculum planning and in monitoring the pupils' progress.
- Subject evaluation is good. A wide range of evidence is used to define strengths and identify what could be better. A close watch is kept on the achievement of different groups of pupils. The good quality provision testifies to the impact of past actions.
- Current subject development priorities are appropriate and relate well to whole-school aims. Development plans show ambition for further improvement but some targets lack clear success criteria. This impedes

both planning how to make the desired change and the process of checking whether the intended impact happens.

- The subject leader actively seeks and sustains effective links with subject networks and initiatives outside the school so as to enrich the pupils' opportunities. She works hard to keep up to date with national subject debates and uses them well to inform subject development.

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

This is good.

- Pupils develop good skills in drawing from observed, remembered or imagined starting points. They value drawing as an essential tool.
- They learn well how to handle different media when drawing so that the skills developed with a pencil are reflected in painting or when drawing with torn or cut paper to make collages.
- Sketchbooks are used regularly to record information and develop ideas. The pupils value their books as risk-free places to try things out.
- Curriculum experiences in drawing are prioritised and planned well to ensure breadth and good progression in pupils' learning.
- Drawing is taught well overall, although on some occasions, as with other areas of learning, the features of high-quality work are not communicated clearly enough to pupils to help them improve.

Examples of good practice, which we discussed, include:

- the subject leader's determination in sustaining the high profile of the subject
- the breadth of curriculum experience which provides a distinctive aspect of the school's identity
- the pupils' achievement, enjoyment and positive approach to learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- Improving the pupils' progress further by:
  - making sure tasks in lessons always enable the learning objectives to be achieved
  - making sure that the features of successful work are modelled clearly for pupils so they are able to evaluate their own progress more effectively when deciding what to do next.
- Sharpening subject development further by:
  - including precisely defined targets linked to each development priority so that steps to bring about change are purposeful and the impact can be checked.

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