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Ms S Parkes
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Parkes

Ofsted 2009-10 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 17 November 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 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 included discussions with pupils and staff, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, and observation of two lessons in Key Stage 2 and the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

Achievement in art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- In the Nursery and Reception classes, most children make good progress exploring and responding to a wide range of well-designed activities that tempt participation and promote creativity, especially outdoors. Templates are used too readily when children learn new skills and make art. As they

move into Year 1, almost all pupils' attainment meets typical expectations and many of the girls exceed them.

- Pupils make steady and sustained progress through the rest of the school. The school takes boys' and girls' preferences, interests and preferred ways of working fully into account when planning pupils' work. This contributes to closing the gap between boys' and girls' attainment by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Assessment is not rigorous enough for teachers to plan the starting points in lessons with sufficient accuracy. Prior attainment is not taken fully into account. This constrains the level of challenge and achievement for some pupils, particularly the most able.
- All pupils behave well, use tools and materials with care and organise their workspaces independently. These attributes and skills contribute to productive and creative learning.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

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

- Good links with other subjects promote interest, engagement and understanding in lessons. Pupils work with sustained interest, especially when they work in groups. The best teaching allows plentiful opportunities for this where pupils talk passionately about their own work and are able to comment sensitively about others' work.
- Pupils generally receive appropriate support and guidance. However, there are missed opportunities to deepen pupils' knowledge and proficiency in applying skills because starting points are too similar for different pupils.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- The school's good curriculum is extremely inclusive. It supports all groups of pupils equally well so that everyone achieves at least satisfactorily.
- Pertinent links to other subjects, particularly English, contribute to pupils' sustained engagement in lessons. Opportunities to extend and enrich pupils' experiences by working with living artists, visiting galleries and participating in local arts events are plentiful.
- The most able and talented and the most vulnerable pupils benefit from extra tuition from specialist teachers and other staff with a flair and interest in the subject.
- Information and communication technology is used well by staff and pupils to support and promote learning.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

Leadership and management of art and design are good.

- An experienced subject leader with specialist subject knowledge and a passion for creativity provides strong leadership.
- The subject is monitored diligently and evaluated to identify areas for development. Nonetheless the foci for improvement are centred on provision. There is not yet a system in place to gather data on standards so that teachers can, for example, target pupils capable of exceeding national expectations.
- Collections of work provide helpful guidance for staff on curriculum coverage and ideas for future planning. These are not yet levelled or annotated to provide teachers with an overview of progression or to exemplify National Curriculum attainment levels.
- Support for newly qualified teachers is excellent. They receive coaching, information about the subject and training to develop their expertise and confidence in teaching the subject. Opportunities for the subject leader to observe and evaluate teaching in other areas of the school are limited.

Subject issue: How effectively do pupils learn to draw with confidence and creativity?

Pupils learn to draw satisfactorily.

- Work seen on display and in pupils' sketchbooks shows that their drawing develops satisfactorily over time.
- Pupils use a wide range of pens, brushes and papers for drawing and are confident in using them.
- Techniques such as hatching and cross-hatching, blending, layering or breaking colour are not taught in sufficient depth to bring high quality and refinement to pupils' work.
- Sketchbooks are not used widely for practice, experimentation and exploration so that pupils build a personal repertoire of techniques to refer to and use in future work.

Examples of good practice, which we discussed, include:

- the school's broad and inclusive curriculum that responds to pupils' needs and supports all groups well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- deepening pupils' knowledge and refining their skills in the subject by:
 - using assessment to take more account of pupils' prior achievement
 - developing the use of sketchbooks to promote pupils' confidence and creativity in drawing.

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

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector