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Dear Mr Jones

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: art, craft and design

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 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 to draw with confidence and creativity.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published subject 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 interviews with pupils and staff, scrutiny of documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons, one in Reception, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

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 Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stages 1 and 2 the standards attained varies widely. In specific projects, particularly group and large-scale work involving paint, textiles or collage, pupils reach typical standards. Individual work involving observation or drawing is generally below average.
- While pupils know about the subject matter of different artists' work, their understanding about how or why art is made is generally limited to their

experience of visiting artists. Prints created by Year 6 pupils with a visiting printmaker show how their best work reflects their understanding.

- A large impressionist painting of a local garden by Year 2 pupils, applying techniques used by Monet, demonstrates the impact of first-hand experience and focused teaching. However, sketchbooks are underused to consolidate special experiences by building a repertoire of techniques to refer to and use in future work. Not enough choices or informed decisions are made by pupils.
- Boys and girls develop positive attitudes in and through the subject. For example, Year 4 pupils enjoyed an opportunity to express different emotions connected to anti-bullying, through their choice of colour and use of line. However, some art work created in other subjects is naïve, showing insufficient refinement of skills or depth of subject knowledge.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

The quality of teaching of art and design is satisfactory.

- Pupils' portfolios and sketchbooks indicate that the quality and impact of teaching in the subject are inconsistent. However, the expertise of visiting artists is used well to improve pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils interviewed were positive about their experience of the subject, in some cases enriched by supportive work with parents outside school.
- The teaching observed during the visit was effective due to: enthusiasm stemming from teachers' ownership of the lesson; focused questioning by teachers and support staff; practical activity punctuated by discussion and sharing work; and pupils' positivity. In one lesson, the teacher skilfully built on pupils' learning in the lesson by introducing the work of an artist towards the end, expecting pupils to apply their understanding and make connections with their own experience. Pupils achieved the objective convincingly.
- Lessons are pitched appropriately for the majority of pupils. However, assessment is used insufficiently to differentiate starting points for individual pupils, or tackle common weaknesses, for example drawing. There are missed opportunities to capitalise on pupils' best work in the subject by using assessment information to monitor their progress across the school.
- The school's new scheme of work has been introduced to support lesson planning and promote pupils' progression, but it is too early to evaluate the impact on standards.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

The art, craft and design curriculum is satisfactory.

- The subject curriculum enables all pupils to visit an art gallery and work with a visiting artist. Pupils' first-hand experiences promote higher-quality work.

- The new scheme of work provides a clear framework of progression to promote the development of pupils' skills in using two- and three-dimensional media. Expectations of their subject knowledge and understanding of different artists, craftworkers and designers remains unclear.
- Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) to promote pupils' learning about the subject. However, curriculum plans, displays and portfolios indicate that pupils' use of ICT as a creative medium is very limited.
- Different subjects are frequently used as a context for art, craft and design but with varied success depending on the clarity of subject-specific objectives. Where an issue explored in personal, social, health and economic education is used as a stimulus, for example recycling, pupils apply their learning well in art.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

Leadership and management of art and design are satisfactory.

- Subject leadership and management are informed well by contact with the art, craft and design community and educational community, for example through the subject leader's use of professional development provided by galleries and the National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD).
- The recently updated policy clearly expresses commitment to the distinctive contribution of the subject. Development planning priorities are appropriate but the success criteria are insufficiently clear about the expected impact on pupils' achievement.
- The impact of subject leadership and management across the school is limited by the part-time status of the subject leader which restricts opportunities to observe and monitor teaching and learning regularly. You embraced this visit as an opportunity to involve the staff and pupils in gathering, presenting and evaluating evidence of their work in the subject.
- The development of a portfolio of standards is at an early stage. While displays are used effectively to celebrate pupils' work, there is insufficient exemplification or annotation showing how the standards achieved in the school relate to different National Curriculum levels.

Subject issue:

The development of students' confidence and creativity through drawing is inadequate.

- The quality of drawing is generally low, showing insufficient control or experimentation with mark-making as pupils progress through the school.
- Evidence of pupils' record of drawing contrasted with the well-observed work seen in Reception and Year 2, and imaginative drawing in Year 4.

- Sketchbooks are used insufficiently to develop pupils' confidence with graphic media, or promote pupils' refinement of skills by revisiting previous work.
- A narrow range of drawing approaches is taught, limiting opportunities for pupils to discover tools, techniques or drawing surfaces that inspire creativity.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing more consistently high standards by:
 - assessing pupils' progress more systematically and regularly
 - monitoring the impact of the scheme of work on teaching and achievement
 - developing a portfolio that makes levels of attainment explicit visually
- improving the quality of observation and drawing by:
 - teaching pupils how to record from observation
 - using sketchbooks across the curriculum and regularly in art, craft and design
 - widening approaches to drawing through participation in national initiatives.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the subject in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will also be made available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector