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Dear Mr Burton

Ofsted 2009-10 subject 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 7 January 2010 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 reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text.

The evidence used to inform judgements included interviews with pupils and staff, scrutiny of documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons, including Reception, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

Achievement in art, craft and design is good.

- Overall, pupils make good progress in developing subject skills, knowledge and understanding during their time at the school. Many pupils attain above average standards in specific projects, particularly two-dimensional work.
- Boys and girls handle a wide range of tools and techniques effectively. Their confident mark-making in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key

Stage 1 contributes to lively, expressive work achieved by the full range of ability.

- By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' knowledge of the visual elements, such as colour and composition, is advanced. Through local gallery visits, they develop a keen awareness of how to apply their understanding.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils sharpen their observational skills and control. This was clearly evident in a Year 6 lesson where pupils quickly captured different poses of the human figure. Inspired, well-informed teaching feeds their appetite for knowledge. Learning new computer techniques promoted imaginative work.
- Evidence of work across Years 3 to 6 indicates that while good standards are achieved, pupils could make more use of prior experience to pursue individual strengths and refine their ideas to achieve more high-quality work.
- Sketchbooks reflect the range of skills that pupils develop and could select from, for example to work on a large scale or in mixed-media. Purposeful visits ensure they also contain a record of experiences to develop back in school.
- Boys and girls demonstrate very positive attitudes towards learning in the subject. They are conscious of the need for sensitivity when criticising the work of others, often using praise. Early examples of peer-evaluation include examples of constructive, well-informed advice.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

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

- Pupils' portfolios and sketchbooks indicate that the quality and impact of teaching in the subject are good overall. Most classrooms contain displays of pupils' art, craft and design work, used to celebrate outcomes. A particularly effective display inspired by a visit to Kettle's Yard included information and examples of the process and purpose of the project, reinforcing pupils' learning. Some subject teaching inspires wider learning well, for example by recreating a Breughel in role-play or using painting to explore light and dark.
- The lessons observed during the visit were introduced enthusiastically. A very good range of images was used to inspire the pupils and ensure that different responses to a shared starting point were encouraged. Pupils looked and listened carefully but could be engaged practically earlier on, for example by recording ideas and images to reflect on and revisit independently.
- Pupils' particularly creative achievements reflect the teachers' confidence to demonstrate techniques, establish pupils' understanding through a well-structured start, but respond to the unexpected positively and critically. These factors have also underpinned successful work with visiting artists.
- Individual lessons are pitched appropriately for the majority of pupils. However, more use could be made of assessment information to monitor

pupils' progress across the school in different aspects of the subject, personalise challenges and capitalise on work that shows particular promise.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

The art, craft and design curriculum is outstanding.

- The school is already delivering the local authority's commitment to regular cultural visits for all pupils. Every year, pupils experience well-prepared visits to art galleries and museums that link clearly to their lessons in school. The use of local links is exemplary. For example, a whole-school sculpture project using reclaimed materials engaged parents and the local community and enhanced pupils' pride, achievement and understanding about sustainability.
- The school's scheme of work promotes pupils' progression by indicating increasingly challenging expectations of their drawing and work in two- and three-dimensional media. Recent curriculum and professional development using digital media has increased the integration of computer-aided art and design into lessons to good effect.
- Curriculum planning in the subject provides a secure basis for lesson design without restricting opportunities for learning from unpredictable stimuli. For example, during the visit pupils were encouraged to explore the creative potential of snow and ice.
- Extra-curricular opportunities in the subject include effective use of the school's central courtyard to promote independent and pupil-led activities linked to the subject. For example, a handling collection of natural forms and a set of images of Andy Goldsworthy's work with similar objects inspired pupils to create land sculptures individually and in groups.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

The leadership and management of art, craft and design are outstanding.

- Subject and whole-school vision are complementary and successfully embrace and promote pupils' academic, cultural and creative development. A recent staff survey refining the school's vision, rated highly the need to develop the qualities and skills in pupils often associated with creative practitioners, for example, originality and resilience.
- Different sources of subject guidance are managed and used effectively. For example, schemes of work developed nationally and progression ladders developed locally have been successfully adapted to a school-specific context to develop a curriculum that meets pupils' needs and interests.
- A range of internal evidence is used to evaluate provision, and identify and implement improvements required. Criteria developed nationally, for example through the 'Artsmark' scheme, have been used to evaluate provision and prioritise improvements required, for example increasing the

use of digital media. The use of classroom observation to monitor standards and challenge individual pupils' progression in relation to the National Curriculum levels is at an earlier stage of development but part of a rigorous new two-year cycle.

- Innovation reflects the school's clarity about the specific contribution of the subject. Links with schools in other parts of the country and world are being developed through pupils' art as a common language. Art resources designed for playtimes are being used to promote inclusion and collaboration. Parental involvement in developing this initiative promotes follow-up work at home.

Subject issue:

The development of pupils' confidence and creativity through drawing is good.

- Pupils develop confidence in their use of drawing to communicate ideas and observations. Their early experimentation with graphic media and continuous use of sketchbooks contribute to bold mark-making. Many pupils created impressive observational drawings of Cambridge bikes.
- The use of drawing to develop creativity is evident early on when pupils use a range of media freely to express their imagination. Comparing contrasting images by different artists, for example juxtaposing classical and cartoon drawings, widens knowledge and increases interest. Drawing in the context of three-dimensional or community activity such the 'The Big Draw' is at an earlier stage.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing more work at the higher levels, particularly in Key Stage 2, by:
 - using continuous assessment of pupils' individual progress to pitch challenges
 - enabling pupils to personalise their achievement by pursuing specific interests
 - developing the portfolio with aspirational work achieved in and outside school
 - widening pupils' experience of drawing for a range of purposes.

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

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be made available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector