

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Ms S Watts  
Headteacher  
Ivy Road Primary School  
Ivy Road  
Forest Hall  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
NE12 9AP

Dear Ms Watts

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 13 January 2010 to look at 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 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 discussions with pupils and staff, analysis of pupils' work, scrutiny of documentation and observation of five lessons; two in the Early Years Foundation Stage, one in Key Stage 1 and two in 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.

- From often very low starting points on entry into the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress in their creative development, although standards attained are still below average by the time they enter Key Stage 1.
- Children experience a wide range of materials and successfully learn to develop their fine motor skills and manipulate tools and materials

confidently. For example, when making collages and exploring paints using various types of squeezing and squirting bottles and sprays. They are beginning to develop their ideas in sketch books and discuss their views about their work.

- Pupils make steady progress during the rest of their time in school and by the time they leave in Year 6, attain standards that are broadly average. There is little difference between boys' and girls' achievements, those who have special educational needs and/ or learning difficulties or who are vulnerable, because all pupils are nurtured and supported well by all adults in school and classes.

#### Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

The quality of teaching of art and design is satisfactory overall.

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are often exemplary in lessons because of the positive relationships between teachers and pupils. Good teacher knowledge and use of interesting displays, artefacts and the interactive whiteboards help to stimulate and maintain pupils' keen interest and enjoyment in their work.
- Lessons are structured well with detailed planning and learning objectives that are clearly explained and understood. Teachers generally use similar starting points that are matched effectively to these overall objectives. Opportunities for pupils to develop diverse outcomes from these starting points, however, are limited. As a result, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to experiment, develop their independence skills, or take risks.
- Teachers' oral feedback on pupils' work in lessons is regular and valued by pupils. However, at Key Stage 1 and 2, other forms of assessment are informal. Thus opportunities are missed to make sure that teachers' knowledge of pupils' progress is used to inform planning so that lessons are always matched to pupils' individual abilities; or used to pinpoint exactly what they need to do help them improve. This limits the ability for some pupils to make faster progress in lessons.

#### Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

The art, craft and design curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is satisfactory and getting better because of the focus the school has on improving it through the development of a whole-school creative curriculum. Art, craft and design have been placed at its heart. Although it is too early to fully evaluate the impact, oral feedback from staff, pupils and lesson observations show this is making a positive difference.
- The curriculum is planned to ensure pupils access a wide range of experiences to motivate their interest in learning, promote success through the arts and to develop their speaking and listening skills alongside their subject-specific skills.

- National Curriculum requirements are covered effectively and are enriched well by the many visits out of, and visitors to, school. Pupils have opportunities to visit museums, galleries and work with contemporary artists, which adds to their achievements in, and enjoyment of the subject. They have satisfactory opportunities to consider the work of famous artists of the past. Older pupils are able to research artists and can recall well their learning and the influence of artists studied on their work.
- Exciting new initiatives are planned in the short and longer term which will continue to broaden pupils' opportunities to work in a variety of materials and environments, including using nature to further develop large-scale art work. This builds on the successful 'Walking up our Garden' and the 'Art in the Park' projects where pupils worked with local artists in the school grounds and local park.
- The use of computers in art is being embedded effectively and pupils relish the regular opportunities they have to develop their ideas in this medium; for example, by using computers to construct animations, image making and research.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

Leadership and management of art and design are satisfactory and improving.

- Since your appointment in July 2008, you have raised the subject's profile significantly; successfully engendering a common sense of purpose and belief that art is very important in raising standards, engaging and capturing the imaginations of pupils and stimulating their learning.
- The enthusiastic art coordinator, with the support of an experienced higher-level teaching assistant, is making sure the subject continues to improve and develop.
- The coordinator has developed a collegiate approach to the learning and development of staff; collaborating with each other and colleagues in other schools and sharing good practice. She has also secured the services of the local authority's art adviser to support further developments.
- Insightful self-evaluation ensures that you and the coordinator have a very accurate view of the subject's strengths and areas for improvement. Effective plans are in place to improve those weaker areas. Priorities are identified clearly in the school development plan and in cross-curricular planning that all staff use.
- Formal assessment procedures are still in the early stages of development. Portfolios of pupils' work have been developed to support teachers in moderating and evaluating the standards their pupils attain. However, assessment is not rigorous enough to help teachers plan work that will stretch all pupils.

Subject issue:

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

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children develop confidence in mark making and drawing and develop their observational skills successfully through well-planned and regularly assessed activities.
- Pupils say they enjoy the many opportunities to develop their drawing skills, using a range of materials and in different contexts, through the cross-curricular nature of art, craft and design. This helps them to hone and practise skills already learned to good effect; their observational drawing skills are strong.
- However, pupils' progress in their drawing is satisfactory overall because activities do not always extend what they already know and can already do well.
- Sketch books, when used well, are helping children to develop ideas, reflect on their work and practise skills but their use is irregular and inconsistent.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising standards further by:
  - making sure activities in lessons are always matched closely to pupils' prior learning, individual needs and starting points
  - developing formal assessment processes that checks pupils' progress regularly, inform teachers' planning and enable the development of challenging individual targets for improvement
  - providing more open-ended activities that enable pupils to develop their independence and creative skills further
  - making sure sketchbooks are used consistently well across the school.

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

Margaret Farrow  
Her Majesty's Inspector