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Dear Ms Ziebell

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 8 February 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 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews, scrutiny of documentation, 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 is in line with that expected when they join the Reception class. They make good progress, learning to use art, craft and design confidently to respond to their experiences.
- Progress continues to be good during Key Stages 1 and 2, so that pupils' attainment is above that expected by the end of Year 6. Boys and girls do equally well, as do the above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- Pupils enjoy their learning, behaving very well and sustaining good levels of focus during lessons. They explore the properties of materials and processes carefully and make good use of what they learn about other creative practitioners to develop their own creativity.
- Good progress is made in learning to collect and record visual material from which to cultivate ideas, notably through the use of sketchbooks. Pupils work hard to develop personal responses to their starting points. On some occasions, however, they do not have a clear enough understanding of the features of successful work to help them decide how well they are doing. This means some work is not resolved as fully as it could be.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

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

- The teachers approach the subject with enthusiasm. Lessons are engaging and include a good variety of tasks to sustain the pace of learning. Both teachers and teaching assistants are effective when managing complex resources, such as equipment and reference material, and making best use of the available time.
- The staff work well as a team to share ideas and develop their subject knowledge so they can teach with confidence. Good use is made of the expertise of others to enrich subject teaching, for example through education staff in museums or creative practitioners working in the school.
- Teachers know their pupils well and their individual needs are met well in lessons. Their progress is monitored closely by staff, especially through individual or group discussion. These opportunities are exploited effectively to develop pupils' subject vocabulary and listening skills.
- Regular reflection about the quality of work is built into lessons and pupils think hard about how to improve. The impact of this is seen in their good overall progress. However, some opportunities are missed to help them clarify precisely what their intentions are for their work, so that they can be more purposeful in refining what they are doing. More could be made of references to other artists' work to show how ideas are refined.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- The curriculum has been developed carefully over time to meet the pupils' needs and ensure good progression. The thematic approach adopted makes logical connections between the subject and other areas of the curriculum, adding to the depth of pupils' learning in the subject.
- Pupils encounter a good range of materials, across art, craft and design disciplines. They work on a variety of scales in two and three-dimensions, with particular strengths in mixed-media work. The school has identified a need to widen the range of pupils' three-dimensional work, which currently, for example, includes few opportunities to model in clay.

- Good steps are taken to enrich the subject curriculum through stimulating experiences, which the pupils enjoy. Many themes involve visits or visitors with effective reference, for example, to the art collection in a stately home. Imaginative use is also made of online resources, such as those at the National Gallery, and of local stimuli, such as the castle.
- The art club is much valued by pupils. It is well attended and helps pupils of all abilities to develop their subject skills further. Home-learning projects make a good contribution to pupils' achievement and to their skills in independently exploring a theme.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

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

- Subject leadership has made a good impact on the quality of provision, so that art, craft and design activities are an important part of the school's identity. The high-quality displays and pupils' respect for them testify to this.
- The quality of provision is monitored carefully through scrutiny of work and checking the quality of lessons. As a result, staff have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of what is provided.
- Effective use is made of professional development to support subject teaching. Good steps are taken to share good practice and make full use of opportunities for staff training, such as through learning from creative practitioners or gallery educators.
- Strategic planning is good, with current priorities including expanding the range of three-dimensional work. Nevertheless, development plans do not identify clearly what the short-term steps are that will enable long-term goals such as this to be reached or progress to be monitored.

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

This aspect is good.

- Pupils gain confidence in using drawing to respond to first-hand experiences and to explore and develop ideas. They are given well-structured experiences which build their skills. Different approaches to drawing are taught with a good degree of confidence. Subject leadership places considerable emphasis on drawing as a fundamental skill so that it is embedded in subject provision and the impact reviewed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving pupils' achievement further by ensuring they are always clear about the features of successful work, so that they can think independently about how to develop their work

- ensuring further improvement in the overall effectiveness of the subject by identifying more precisely what short-term steps need to be taken to reach long-term aims and to help monitor progress toward them.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop art, craft and design in the school.

As I 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 available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector