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Mr P Gair
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Gair

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 1 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 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 the judgements included interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of five lessons.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

Pupils' achievement in art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress in their creative development from broadly average starting points and assessment is used well to plan children's future learning.
- This represents good improvement since the Ofsted school inspection in January 2009, when it reported missed opportunities, especially outdoors, to extend children's creative development. During the visit, children

worked with enthusiasm outdoors in the snow, creating textured designs with tools and mixing paints to sprinkle and spray large patterns.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress in the subject throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. Recent monitoring information, evidence from sketchbooks and pupils' art portfolios show that most pupils attain broadly average standards in the subject by the end of Year 6.
- Boys, girls and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities generally make similar progress in lessons, because of the effective support of adults.
- Pupils with particular talents in the subject have not always been challenged to achieve their best. This is because, until September, assessment of pupils' work in Key Stages 1 and 2 has been informal and planning and teaching have not taken full account of pupils' prior levels of achievement.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

The quality of teaching of art, craft and design is satisfactory overall, with some particular strengths.

- Teaching is at least satisfactory and improving because successful strategies used by teachers in English and mathematics are now used in this subject. For example, lessons are well structured and teachers use effective questioning to encourage pupils to think like artists.
- Teachers are enthusiastic, well informed and use a range of interesting examples to highlight styles and techniques used by artists or designers.
- Good relationships and pupils' exemplary behaviour and attitudes are the norm. Pupils apply themselves eagerly to their work and are encouraged to choose materials and tools to develop their ideas. However, choices are sometimes restricted and too often, from shared starting points, pupils complete similar work, limiting their experimentation or creative risk-taking.
- Feedback from teachers is now regular through comments in pupils' well-marked sketchbooks and orally. However, sketchbooks are not used consistently well across the school.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

The art, craft and design curriculum is satisfactory.

- The Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 curriculum provide good links between children's creative development and other areas of learning. There is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-led art, craft and design tasks that children tackle with enthusiasm.
- The curriculum provides satisfactory opportunities for pupils to learn the vocabulary of art, such as tone and colour, texture and form. They use a

satisfactory range of materials and equipment, with more opportunities to succeed in two-dimensional than three-dimensional work.

- Pupils occasionally have opportunities to work with local artists and craftworkers, and to visit galleries. There are limited opportunities for pupils to display their work to a wider audience. For example, they have displayed work in a local solicitor's office. Pupils spoke proudly of the day when their portraits of their mums were published in the local paper.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

Leadership and management of art and design are satisfactory.

- You and the subject coordinator have worked diligently to develop a subject that had little structure 18 months ago. Actions taken have had a positive impact. This includes an improving focus on pupils' development of skills and the growing range of experiences on offer that pupils say they enjoy.
- The coordinator is very clear about the strengths and areas for improvement and is working to improve these in a measured way. Termly assessment of pupils' work is now in place and this is beginning to be used to inform planning, but it is too early to see the impact on standards.
- The subject leader works well with other staff to share and develop resources and ideas for teaching. However, opportunities to learn from and share good practice with expert professionals or colleagues in other schools are limited.

Subject issue

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

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children learn to draw confidently using a range of markers and tools. Their observational skills are developing well as evidenced through drawings of their favourite toys.
- Evidence from pupils' work and lessons seen show pupils are taught how to use a range of markers, including charcoal and grades of pencils effectively to investigate their tonal qualities and develop their drawings. However, overall, pupils' drawing skills are not yet systematically planned to promote progression as they move through the school.
- Sketchbooks are used across the school but not always regularly or effectively enough. In the best examples, pupils practise, experiment, explore and develop techniques and skills.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- widening curriculum opportunities by enabling pupils to:
 - work in three-dimensions, including clay
 - refine their drawing skills as they progress through the school

- work with contemporary artists, craft workers and designers, visit galleries and exhibit their own work to a wider audience
- developing subject leadership and management by:
 - ensuring planning and teaching always take account of the now regular assessment information and pupils' individual starting points, to ensure all can make the fastest possible progress in their learning
 - ensuring that sketchbooks are used regularly and consistently well
 - developing networks with other experts, to share good practice and ideas.

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