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19 May 2010

Mrs H Trattles  
Headteacher  
Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic  
Primary School  
Capenhurst Lane  
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Dear Mrs Trattles

Ofsted 2010-11 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 12 May 2010 to look at work in art, craft and design.

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 joint observations of three lessons.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

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

- Pupils develop good subject skills, knowledge and understanding. However, their progress is inconsistent within and between years. The achievements of boys and girls with different abilities are particularly good when their work is rooted in the subject, for example through responding to first-hand experiences such as original artefacts, visits and visitors.
- Pupils' work with visiting artists is impressive because the scale is large, the media and techniques are mixed and their individual and collaborative contributions combine. While teaching and support staff promote pupils' enjoyment well, their variable expertise impacts on their ability to challenge quality, evident in a Year 1 lesson where the high quality of animation work directly reflected the teachers' sharing of standards from the start.

- Sketchbooks are used effectively by pupils in Years 1 to 6 to express their imagination and record observations. Their growing confidence in using graphic media is evident in large-scale drawings of the built environment in Year 5 and the natural environment in Year 6. Nevertheless, their use of other media develops less markedly and is constrained by too little revisitation.
- Pupils show good understanding of the work of different artists, craftworkers and designers. For example, Year 2 pupils were able to explain the meanings of aboriginal work through collaboration with Year 6. They used their ability to reflect to create narrative paintings about Ellesmere Port. While some pupils express their creativity tentatively, the Year 4 pupils who contrasted traditional with contemporary batik created original work.

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

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

- Teaching observed was characterised by inspiring stimulus, shared enthusiastically from the start, well-prepared resources and supportive relationships with pupils. Support staff contribute very well when deployed to specific roles. High expectations of pupils' behaviour promote careful listening, thoughtful answers to questions and cooperative group work.
- Scrutiny of work across the school indicates that the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and achievement ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. Some very successful approaches enable pupils to develop and apply their reflective skills in the subject, such as the exploration of friendship in Year 2. Where work shows potential but remains satisfactory, the level of challenge for pupils to review, modify and refine their skills appears too modest.

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

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

- Since the infant and junior schools combined, a good curriculum model has been designed that identifies regular opportunities for pupils to learn new subject skills and knowledge. A progression ladder makes clear how prior learning can be built on. However, the school is aware that, as pupils progress through the programme at different rates, individual expectations will need to be adjusted, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- All pupils experience a gallery visit, encounter a living artist, and work in the context of different areas of the curriculum in and out of school. The development of drawing as a continuous skill to record observations, express ideas and recall memories, is supported by sketchbook work in all years. Creativity is promoted through a range of experiences in the Early Years Foundation Stage but the breadth of mark-making is limited.

## Effectiveness of leadership and management of art, craft and design

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

- Subject monitoring and evaluation are used effectively to share strengths and tackle weaknesses. The local authority subject self-evaluation framework is used well, together with visits to other schools and exhibitions, to moderate achievements. Priorities identified by the school are, therefore, well-informed, are supported by appropriate strategies to spread best practice and indicate good capacity for further improvement.
- Opportunities to work with visiting artists or through gallery visits are managed well to raise standards. While the school is monitoring pupils' experiences consistently, the use of assessment is more variable, for example in challenging work carried out in the context of other subjects that sometimes dilutes progression in art, craft and design. However, pupils' creative development across the school is being approached thoughtfully, showing good awareness of the impact of specific subjects.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- promoting consistently high expectations of pupils' progression by:
  - exemplifying standards through an annotated portfolio and by developing a gallery of outstanding achievement in the school
  - teaching pupils how to review, modify and refine their work by revisiting previous experiences
  - challenging pupils' creativity, subject-skills, knowledge and understanding by integrating assessment into progression monitoring
- ensuring the subject makes a distinctive contribution to the wider school by making more explicit the opportunities to develop and apply pupils' personal development in the context of their art, craft and design.

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 under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton  
Her Majesty's Inspector