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Mr J Hutchinson
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Dear Mr Hutchinson

Ofsted subject survey: identifying good practice in art, craft and design

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 14 July 2010 to look at work in art, craft and design, concentrating on how effectively pupils develop confidence and creativity through drawing.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: lesson observations; scrutiny of work; and discussions with pupils and staff. The visit focused on the impact of a drawing project entitled 'Active Learning' involving Year 5 pupils, their teacher and an artist. In addition, the visit looked at the wider dissemination of the project with other classes. The overall project involved 15 local primary schools and incorporated professional development funded by the local authority and led by the Campaign for Drawing.

Features of good practice

- Pupils were offered a wide range of unfamiliar approaches to drawing. These included: collaborative drawing; very large scale work; drawing from memory; drawings developed by exchanging work; and drawing with both hands. The diverse range of well-planned activities enabled pupils to understand the breadth of possibilities for drawing.
- Pupils developed confidence and rediscovered their enjoyment of drawing. Many boys and girls said that they found that an increased exposure to drawing for different purposes had led them to reappraise their skills and to understand that it was not just those who can depict accurately what

they see, in their words 'like a photograph', who are good at drawing. This was reminiscent of how they felt about drawing 'when we were very little'.

- Pupils learnt to use drawing as a way to think about the world around them. In the initial project, they used drawing to depict sound and found out how to develop a vocabulary of marks which represented something heard rather than seen. Subsequently, pupils have investigated the structure of our solar system through drawing. Pupils said that first of all drawing heightened their awareness of sound and second it helped them to remember facts such as spatial relationships between planets.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills were given a significant boost through regular opportunities to talk about their drawing experiences with their peers. The school has also identified gains in the quality of writing as a result of pupils' increased ability to express their ideas and structure their thoughts.
- The quality of pupils' learning experience was enhanced by working with an artist who was able to show how drawing is used in creative practice. This gave the drawing activities relevance, significance and valuable exposure to drawing in a vocational context.
- The subject leader made notable gains in her specialist knowledge and in her confidence to use drawing in her teaching. Pupils valued the wider repertoire of their teacher developed through working with the artist and the approaches to drawing that became much more exciting after this point. In particular, both the pupils and the teacher said that they learned together as the artist helped them to adapt in response to their emerging ideas.
- Although pupils worked from memory, observation and imagination, some opportunities were nevertheless missed to develop their observational drawing skills and to ensure that they understood the distinctness of these different sources for making drawings.
- The project has successfully raised the profile of drawing across the school by giving the subject leader the skills and confidence to help her colleagues improve the teaching of drawing. She has run professional development activities as well as whole-school events such as 'The Big Draw', which are helping the project to make a sustained impact on pupils' learning.
- The assessment of pupils' progress in using a wider range of approaches to drawing is at an early stage. However, more should be done to ensure that pupils are confident in deciding how to improve their work. For example, they are confident in assessing the quality of observational drawing but less so when the outcomes are more abstract. Similarly, teachers are not yet secure in tracking pupils' progress over time in using drawing for different reasons.
- Your strong support for the project has enabled it to make a good impact on the pupils directly involved and a lasting and wider impact elsewhere in the school. The project has linked well with wider curriculum developments aimed to enhance pupils' independent learning skills.

- Links with the other schools are not being exploited fully to share effective practice and tackle weaker areas, such as the assessment of pupils' progress. Despite this, the school is well placed to strengthen external partnerships now begun with local authority staff, artists, other participating schools and the national 'Campaign for Drawing' network.

Areas for development

- Give more emphasis to developing pupils' skills in working from direct observation and ensure that they understand more clearly the difference between working from observation, memory and imagination.
- Improve the assessment of pupils' work in using drawing so that they are confident in assessing the next steps and teachers are able to track their progress and offer appropriate support.
- Develop further the links with other primary schools so as to share experiences in developing the project further and with secondary schools to ensure good progression in pupils' learning.

I hope that 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

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector