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Mrs C Heasman
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Heasman

Ofsted 2011–12 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 27 and 28 March 2012 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: discussions with staff, the subject leader and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of seven lessons, one in each year group.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

Achievement in art, craft and design is good.

- Pupils make good progress from low starting points to reach the standards expected nationally by Year 6. Consistently good teaching and a strongly inclusive ethos in which difference is celebrated, contribute to pupils' confidence and creativity in their art, craft and design work.
- Enjoyment of the subject is strong across all years because pupils are excited by the range of materials and techniques available. Large-scale work, for example outdoor paintings in Year 1 inspired by Rousseau's jungle pictures through to Year 6 Van Gogh inspired landscapes, enables pupils to develop and apply experimentation effectively.
- Not all pupils are able to refine their smaller-scale work with two-dimensional media well. The school's plans to refocus on the use of sketchbooks to support pupils' ability to review and revisit skills, are

appropriate. Very effective sculptures in Year 3 inspired by the work of Richard Sweeney showed the value of revisiting and refining ideas.

- Pupils show great interest in the work of creative practitioners, inspired by their visits to art galleries and museums. Pupils in a Year 4 class studying the work of Paul Klee were able to compare and contrast different work by the artist and make connections independently with a range other artists.
- The subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, the skilful use of art therapy to help pupils with emotional difficulties communicate their feelings or to ease pupils' transition from primary to secondary school. All pupils talked with pride about their achievements in the subject, and that of their peers. In several lessons pupils clapped appreciatively and spontaneously.

Quality of teaching in art, craft and design

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

- Teachers prepare their lessons thoroughly but recognise the importance of adapting their plans in response to pupils' ideas and reactions. They use open-ended questioning consistently well to stimulate pupils' thinking. Pupils are praised for originality and their work is shared with others using well-timed opportunities for them to apply new ideas to their own work.
- The purpose of the lesson is made clear to the pupils from the start, using simple language or technical vocabulary that is clearly explained. Support staff are clear too, about the lesson objectives and their role in helping all pupils to progress equally well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The pace of teaching and learning is busy for all.
- In some classes, teachers use 'expert' pupils particularly well to lead the learning of others, for example by demonstrating their skills or knowledge. This strategy has a strong impact on raising achievement when pupil leaders have refined ideas or skills to share. The school has good plans to raise creative aspirations further still by involving visiting practitioners.
- From the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards assessment is accurate and well informed. Staff show good understanding of progression in the subject, supported by long-term curriculum plans. Through their marking teachers show pupils how to write evaluatively about work. This supports well the school's priority to improve pupils' writing skills.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- Pupils are given a wide range of first-hand experiences. All visit art galleries during their time at the school. Although limited use is made of creative practitioners, their work broadens pupils' experiences further, for example through the use of mosaic. The school also has good plans to capitalise more on the wider experiences of staff, for example in photography, illustration and interior design.

- Local links contribute to a subject curriculum that pupils find relevant and interesting. For example, visits to Coombe gardens, Factory Lane and Shirley Hills enable pupils to learn how to appreciate their environment. Several other topics use historical events connected to London effectively.
- Effective cross-curricular links are made to the subject. Pupils' memorable experiences in the subject are also used successfully as a context for literacy and numeracy work. Importantly, use of the Croydon art scheme contributes to a shared understanding about the progression of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in art, craft and design.
- Pupils are introduced to a wide range of materials and techniques, particularly two-dimensional media. Digital media is also used regularly and creatively. Effective links are made to the work of other artists, recently expanded to include more contemporary practitioners.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

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

- The leadership and management structure ensures that planning in all years is well informed about the subject. The subject leader liaises effectively with subject 'ambassadors' to ensure that any training needs are identified and addressed. Staff work collaboratively, underpinned by a shared understanding of the value of the subject to pupils at the school.
- The subject leader is well informed about national initiatives in the subject. At the time of the visit, work inspired by the 'Face Britain' initiative pervaded the school. Schemes such as 'Take One Picture' and the 'Big Draw' are used well to inspire pupils and enable staff to work together.
- The subject enjoys a good profile across the school and is well positioned to impact further through the development of new shared practical areas. The school website and virtual learning environment are used effectively to share approaches and achievements in the subject.
- Subject self-evaluation is accurate and draws on a comprehensive range of evidence. While the subject leader has limited opportunities to observe other colleagues teach, planning and pupils' work are scrutinised analytically. Well-documented portfolios inform improvement planning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing the use of sketchbooks to support pupils in reviewing their progress, revisiting prior experiences and refining their skills
- fully exploiting available resources to maximise the experience of staff as creative practitioners and the excellent new practical facilities.

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

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector