

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045  
F 020 7421 6855  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Dr C Whiting  
Headteacher  
Southmead Primary School  
Wrafton Road  
Braunton  
Devon  
EX33 2BU

Dear Dr Whiting

Ofsted survey inspection programme – art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 26 September 2007 to look at work in art 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 contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff, discussions with pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the subject was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. On entry, pupils' creative skills are at the level expected for their age. They make adequate progress over time to reach average standards of attainment by the time they leave the school.
- In the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 the pupils are effectively taught how to control different tools and media and use them competently. There is insufficient opportunity for them to pursue their own ideas and interests or to explore the potential of materials imaginatively. This leads to over-reliance on adult support in lessons and limits their enjoyment of creative experiences.

- In Key Stage 2 standards are comparable with similar schools nationally. Pupils' progress in lessons improves in practical aspects of the subject because they are encouraged to make choices, reflect on their work and refine it. Older pupils say that they enjoy using and applying their own ideas and learning from each other.
- Pupils have insufficient knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, designers and craftworkers from different times, cultures and countries.
- Sketchbooks are underused for pupils to explore and develop observation skills and to build a personal repertoire of techniques to use in future work.
- Good relationships and structured lessons ensure that most pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons.

### Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- Typical strengths of teaching include well chosen activities and thoughtfully prepared lessons with sufficient challenge to sustain pupils' interest and enjoyment.
- The school has recently introduced a new planning format that focuses teachers' attention on the skills pupils must, should and could learn in each unit of work. As a result, teachers are clearer about what pupils will learn in each lesson.
- As part of a full curriculum review, a creativity action research group has been initiated to find more ways to inject a creative dimension into teaching and learning across the school in all subjects including art and design.
- Teachers use opportunities to develop pupils' art and design skills in the context of other subjects effectively.
- The pupils' behaviour is managed satisfactorily but when there is insufficient balance between listening, looking and doing some pupils become restless and lose interest.

### Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- In the Foundation Stage a satisfactory range of creative activities both inside and outside provide pupils with opportunities to learn important skills in controlling media. Toys, materials and tools are accessible but not arranged in interesting ways to tempt young learners to diversify and explore their ideas imaginatively.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to work with visiting artists and take part in clubs, Arts Week, Crafts Week and visits to museums or galleries. This extends and broadens their experiences in the subject satisfactorily.
- Information and communication technology is used effectively to project images of art and for research activities.

- Curriculum planning has been redesigned to ensure adequate coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study through cross-curricular themed studies. The two year cycle successfully ensures that pupils in mixed age classes do not repeat units of work.
- Pupils' art work is exhibited uniformly and carefully but there is insufficient variety in the arrangements to excite onlookers or capture their attention.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The new subject leader has sufficient knowledge and understanding of the subject and knows how to lead it forward successfully.
- A comprehensive maintenance plan linked to the school improvement plan provides a useful vehicle to secure further improvements.
- The subject leader is aware that monitoring and quality assurance activities are insufficiently rigorous to provide sufficient evidence for an evaluation of the school's performance in the subject.
- A good start has been made on redesigning curriculum planning with teaching and learning sequences clearly outlined for each unit of work to ensure coherence and progression in learning across the school.
- Governors have a good understanding and knowledge of how the subject is taught in school through regular visits and involvement in the school.

## Subject issue

What is the impact of assessment on the progress of learners?

- The new planning format for art and design, with built in assessment, enables teachers to identify gifted and talented pupils as well as those who require additional support and guidance to be successful.
- The subject leader is beginning to gather a portfolio of pupils' work to support teachers' in assessing pupils' work and progress more accurately.

## Inclusion

- Boys and girls speak favourably about the subject and work with an equal level of enthusiasm in lessons.
- The pupils' study of art from different countries and cultures is too limited.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are quickly identified and supported effectively in art and design.
- Gifted and talented pupils receive additional challenge through courses that extend their art and design skills.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that monitoring and evaluation is based on secure evidence of pupils' progress and performance

- secure a better balance between objective-led activities and creative experiences in teaching and learning
- improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, designers and craftworkers from different times, cultures and countries
- develop the use of sketchbooks
- improve the quality of display to encourage pupils to appreciate each other's work and celebrate achievements as well as to provoke discussion and interest in the subject.

As I explained in my previous letter, 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

Linda Killman  
Her Majesty's Inspector