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Dear Mrs Griffiths

Ofsted Subjects & Survey Inspection Programme – art, craft and design

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 3 October 2007 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 contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters are published on the Ofsted website every half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interview with the subject co-ordinator, discussions with groups of pupils in Key Stage 1, Lower and Upper Key Stage 2, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupil's work, observation of five lessons or part-lessons and art club.

Art, craft and design

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Pupils make a good start at school in developing their creativity; early learning goal assessments, the work and confidence of children in Key Stage 1 support this judgement. Boys and girls are able to express ideas imaginatively, handle a large scale of work and manipulate different materials carefully and inventively. They show interest in the art of others.

- In Key Stage 2 pupils with different abilities continue to progress well in relation to the expectations of the National Curriculum but the school do not currently assess their overall level. Their ability to express imagination on a large scale continues to be a particular quality of their work. However, their repertoire of skills and techniques is widened resulting in effective use of mixed-media.
- The development of key skills through the subject is good. Art is effectively used to promote pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, and understanding of topics such as 'hibernation', 'The water cycle', 'The Blitz' is evidently deepened through their cross-curricular work. In some instances their progress in developing key skills improves the impact of their work in art, for example in information communications technology (ICT). However, their ability to observe, analyse and record although applied across the curriculum is average in quality.
- The personal development of pupils in the subject is good. They enjoy the subject, collaborate well with each other, manage resources safely and contribute thoughtfully in discussion. Pupils are able to reflect when expected, for example on work inspired in Key Stage 1 by 'The Creation' and in Key Stage 2 'Myself'. Nevertheless, self-assessment of progress in the subject is at an early stage of development. Sketchbooks are underused by pupils to review, revisit and record progress.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in the subject are good.

- Lessons are well planned and teachers integrate learning about different subjects effectively. There is a very good balance between sharing the lesson objective with pupils and encouraging different responses. Resources are very well organised and invite self-selection and respect. Displays are attractive, well presented and show pupils that high standards are expected. Some displays provide information that enables pupils to learn from work carried out in other classes. Nevertheless, the school does not have a 'gallery' space given to special work from different age groups.
- Individual pupils are supported well and teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the quality of learning. All pupils are given encouraging and helpful feedback in lessons. However, assessment is underused to identify, develop or address strengths and weaknesses in relation to different strands of the art and design attainment target. Particularly able pupils are given additional challenge through workshops arranged by the Local Authority and more regularly the involvement of parents in the after school club.

Quality of curriculum

The art, craft and design curriculum is satisfactory.

- Pupils have experience of a good range of two-dimensional, three-dimensional and digital media. However, their knowledge and understanding about art, craft and design from different times and places is mostly gained through secondary sources. There are currently no structured opportunities for pupils to

visit an art gallery or work with an artist as an integral part of the curriculum. However, the involvement of the school in community events including the Frodsham Arts Festival makes a positive contribution to their understanding of local culture. Several projects also explore connections between the school and church. Visitors are also welcomed into the school to talk about cultures in the wider world.

- There are good examples of curriculum development where the school has adapted national and local curriculum guidance to the locality. For example, work in the school grounds inspired by the artist Andy Goldsworthy. The best examples of cross-curricular work are where the objectives for different subjects are clearly identified and together deepen the pupils' learning. For example, work in science and art focused on developing their understanding about 'colour'. Cross-phase work in the subject between primary and secondary schools is at an early stage of development.

Leadership and management of art, craft and design

Leadership and management are good.

- The contribution of the subject to pupils' enjoyment and achievement is clearly recognised and consistent throughout the school. Displays are used effectively to monitor the effectiveness of lessons. Good photographic records of work are maintained and some examples of pupils' work are retained as reference for teachers and pupils. The school acknowledge the need to develop this resource as a portfolio that illustrates different levels of achievement in the subject.
- A Local Authority framework for subject self-evaluation is used effectively to identify strengths and weaknesses. Imaginative plans emanate from the school's recent federation with another school to build on strengths and tackle areas for development through close collaboration. However, liaison with other schools that are further ahead in their use of sketchbooks and assessment remain professional development priorities.

Inclusion

Differentiation is evident in the individual support given to pupils during lessons and through additional opportunities that the most able and enthusiastic artists are given to extend their skills. Teachers and support staff share a good understanding of individual needs, interests and aspirations.

Subject issue: The impact of assessment on pupils' progress and creativity

Effective systems exist to track and promote pupils' progress across a range of subjects. However, there are insufficient opportunities identified to assess pupils' progress in relation to the attainment target for art and design. The systematic assessment of pupils' creative development in the Foundation Stage is an example of good practice to build on.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to increase opportunities for pupils to visit an art gallery or work with an artist
- to develop the use of sketchbooks
- to use assessment more consistently to help pupils build on early achievements.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop art, craft and design at 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. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector