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Mrs K Bannon  
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Dear Mrs Bannon

Ofsted Subjects & Survey Inspection Programme – art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 20 November 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 are published on the Ofsted website every half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: discussion with you and the subject co-ordinator, discussion with pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupil's work, a visit to a workshop in the family learning centre and observation of three lessons or part-lessons.

Art and design

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Early learning goal assessments indicate that pupils respond well to creative activities from the start. Boys and girls are able to manipulate different materials and tools carefully when guided by adults but are less confident experimenting freely.
- In Key Stage 1 pupils make satisfactory progress and standards are good when the stimulus is appealing and the activities are open-ended. For example, a Year 2 display inspired by 'animal patterns' showed that pupils

are able to select and use different media, scale and subject matter to create individual outcomes.

- In Key Stage 2 the progress of pupils is accelerated when first hand experience of different artists and exhibitions raises their own creative aspirations. For example, scrolls designed by Year 4 pupils in response to the work of native American artist Frank Big Bear seen at the October Gallery show that pupils are able to use colour, shape and mixed-media effectively to represent narrative.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, work from imagination is often of higher quality than that developed from observation. Year 3 pupils have developed creative ideas about how erupting volcanoes might look through expressive use of shape and colour. However, there is insufficient evidence of pupils building their skills and subject knowledge continuously through recording their thoughts, experiments or evaluations for example in sketchbooks.
- Pupils show understanding of contemporary art work and that created in different times and cultures. It leads to particularly successful outcomes when combined with learning about refining techniques. For example, Year 4 designs inspired by Tapa cloth use shapes symbolically and wax-resist techniques skilfully.
- The subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. The school consciously uses art as a 'universal language' to develop pupils' communication and literacy skills. Pupils listen carefully in art lessons, talk enthusiastically about their work and that of others and collaborate together in group projects. Art and design contexts motivate pupils to talk and write about memorable experiences. Pupils' pride and self-esteem is evident when they refer to their achievements on display or carried further through a commission with a professional artist. Nevertheless, more could be made of their growing confidence, to revisit and refine skills and make choices independently.

## Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in the subject are good.

- Lessons are systematically planned and resourced. Teaching assistants are deployed appropriately and help ensure that pupils with wide ranging ability understand what is expected and how to respond. Objectives for lessons and different groups of pupils are appropriate but could be simplified to make assessment opportunities more explicit and regular. However, pupils are given encouraging and helpful feedback in lessons, mostly without over-direction. Teachers also use displays effectively to contribute to pupils' understanding about the standards expected. Whilst pupils' work in folders indicates that art lessons are inconsistent in quality across different years, the teaching observed during the visit was confident, enthusiastic and purposeful.
- Learning is significantly enriched by excellent partnerships between teachers and other adults. Parents and carers are given good opportunities to support pupils by learning about the subject through workshops and gallery visits organised by the family learning centre that is integral to the school. Practising artists who are often connected to educational initiatives provided by galleries

help promote pupils' creativity and deepen their understanding. For example, a performance artist was observed working with pupils in response to an exhibition of modern Arabic calligraphy by Hassan Massoudy.

### Quality of curriculum

The art and design curriculum is good overall; sustained links with art galleries are an outstanding feature of provision.

- Pupils have experience of a satisfactory range of two-dimensional, three-dimensional and digital media. Topics are often linked to other subjects but some are particularly provocative because they are linked to the subject matter explored by different artists. This enables pupils to explore ideas and concepts of direct relevance to their own lives. For example, during 'refugee week' pupils worked with the artist Nina Gauer who enabled them to use different materials that symbolised the places that different pupils and their families have originated from. Together, groups of pupils combined materials harmoniously, developing mutual understanding and co-operation through the process of working. Some reference is made to the locality but the school buildings and surroundings could be used more often as a visual resource.
- Excellent links are established with different art galleries and museums but a sustained partnership with the 'October Gallery' is a particular strength of provision. This enables the school and gallery to build pupils' critical skills through different visits and work together to ensure that there is continuity between activities in school and gallery. For example, Year 6 pupils explored the work of Romuald Hazoume about the 'debris of consumerism' at the gallery but in school pursued the related issue of scarce materials, linked to the class topic 'World War 2'. Coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study is adequately tracked. However, there is insufficient long term planning to secure pupils' progression of subject skills, knowledge and understanding through the mixture of school and gallery based contexts, subject and cross-curricular themes, planned and unpredictable opportunities to ensure that individually worthwhile projects join together as a meaningful experience.

### Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management are good.

- You ensure that the subject maintains a high profile in the school. Art is valued as a form of communication for the school community, including pupils with low literacy skills when starting school. Displays are used effectively to monitor the effectiveness of lessons and priorities for improvement are well informed, resourced and the effectiveness measured through carefully considered success criteria. Some photographic records of work are maintained but the school recognise the need to develop a portfolio that illustrates different levels of achievement in the subject. During the visit an excellent subject self-evaluation in the form of a powerpoint presentation included accurate illustration of previous projects that exemplified good practice.

- The recently appointed subject leader is enthusiastic to build on existing achievements and his commercial experience. The quality of provision is significantly enhanced through effective management of different partnerships. For example, a joint project with Haverstock School about Shakespeare's England enabled pupils to learn about film making. Through work with artists in residence pupils are also able to see their ideas transformed into commercial quality. For example, their designs for a multi faith project were developed into a steel sculpture with the support of sculptor David Appleyard.

## Inclusion

The wide range of opportunities linked to gallery visits are an entitlement for all pupils. Specific projects embrace the different cultural backgrounds of pupils and promote collaboration. Teachers and support staff use their knowledge of individual needs effectively to target their intervention. Pupils expressed the view that opportunities to extend the skills of the most able artists through an art club should be developed.

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

Evidence of pupils' creative development is used analytically in the Foundation Stage. However, the tracking of pupils' progress throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 in relation to the National Curriculum for art and design is at an early stage of development. The feedback given to pupils in lessons is encouraging and some teachers provide constructive comments about how to improve their art and design work through marking.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- establish a plan for progression to ensure that subject skills, including observation and experimentation, are developed continuously in different contexts
- develop the use of sketchbooks to encourage pupils to record their ideas and experiences, revisit knowledge and skills and inform assessment by pupils and their teachers.

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