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Mrs C Rider
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Rider

Ofsted subject survey: identifying good practice in Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 04 March 2008 to look at the impact of the school's commitment to creative development on pupils' learning, personal development and achievement. The school has been selected for our survey on the basis of the school's provision for developing pupils' creativity.

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 made included interviews with you; discussions with pupils in lessons; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work and observation of pupils working in the classroom and the Forest School.

Features of good practice observed

- Your visionary leadership provides a clear steer for the subject and creativity, placing learners at the heart of teaching and curriculum planning and generating a sense of pride in the good achievement of all children. You communicate this eloquently, with passion and commitment leaving visitors in no doubt that this is a learning community where staff and children are willing to engage in new ideas and think creatively. An example of this is your innovative approach to funding living artists, designers and craftworkers to work alongside children on a regular basis, developing children's creative practice. These rich experiences add to their

repertoire of skills in using 2D, 3D, digital and mixed media on a variety of scale.

- Early years practice is very effective. The children make choices from a very wide range of activities inside the classroom and outside in their play area and in the Forest School developing their creativity. They pursue their ideas in their own way with gusto, often learning from their mistakes. The adults skilfully support their learning, permitting the children to use their initiative with timely intervention to move their learning on.
- The visually exciting displays of good quality work in the communal areas demonstrate the school's commitment to celebrating children's achievement in the subject. Every corner of the school, both inside and out the school grounds, is utilised for eye-catching displays that stimulate curiosity and contribute to the enriched environment for learning.
- Your commitment to children developing as confident, autonomous learners enables children to adopt an 'I can' approach to learning. As a result, the children handle tools and materials confidently, freely experiment and make choices leading to original outcomes in their work. They talk about their ideas, thoughts and feelings with genuine enthusiasm working with engagement and enjoyment.
- Staff are supported and developed through the good subject knowledge of a number of staff, some of whom are practising artists. This provides non specialist teachers with a wealth of expertise to readily draw upon.
- The quality time that staff spend with children discussing their work supports their learning very effectively. The staff know the children well and personalise their learning. As a result all children are fully included and notably, children with special needs thrive. Boys and girls achieve well. The curriculum engages them and the opportunities they have to experiment, think divergently and use their imagination ensure that all children engage in active learning.
- The curriculum provides a very good balance between the teaching of specific skills and the opportunity to revisit and apply them in new ways. Some activities are planned to be pure experience opportunities; others are designed to give children the chance to work towards a quality finished piece of work over time. An excellent example of this is the stunning stained glass window, to which every child contributed that is beautifully exhibited in a bespoke light box.
- The subject plays a major part in developing pupils' personal skills and well-being. The children all have their chance to shine – including those who are especially artistic or creative. This builds their self-esteem and gives recognition to their achievements.
- Resources for art and design are plentiful, accessible and imaginative. The headteacher and staff are forever on the look out for special papers, fabrics and other resources to broaden choices wherever possible.

Area for consideration we discussed:

- to develop consistency in the use of sketchbooks.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the gallery in school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector