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Mr C Walker
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Dear Mr Walker

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 21 May 2008 to look at work in art and design.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the quality of assessment and its impact on pupils' progress and 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. 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 and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and short observations of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of art and design was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- On entry, pupils' creative skills are generally below expectations for their age. However, year on year comparisons are difficult to make due to the small size of each cohort. The school identifies individuals' weaknesses quickly and provides pupils with carefully selected experiences to support them in swiftly making gains by the end of the year.

- In the Foundation/Key Stage 1 class, as a result of effective, systematic teaching and a broad range of art and design experiences, most pupils' attainment matches age-related expectations. Pupils learn to use tools and manipulate media confidently. Their representational drawing shows maturity and their work shows a strong sense of design. Their independence in setting up and clearing away their work space is impressive. Nonetheless, their well-developed skills are not always fully capitalized on, as there is a tendency for templates to be over-used in collage work and painting experiences. Thus opportunities are missed for even more choice in paper size, orientation and composition.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 continue to make good progress and achieve well. They are able to develop ideas from imagination, memory and observation and show a reasonable understanding of the work of artists, designers and craftspeople from different times and cultures. In particular, wide experience in exploring textiles leads to good quality, original work.
- Drawing seen in pupils' sketchbooks in Key Stage 2 lacks intensity and depth revealing underdeveloped observation and mark making skills. This is evident in the lack of decorative detail, contrasting tones and use of techniques such as smudging and hatching. Generally sketchbooks are not used well enough for pupils to create a personal repertoire of ideas, feelings and thoughts.
- There is plentiful opportunity for pupils to work collaboratively and pupils use them well to develop valuable personal skills and creative behaviours to benefit them in lifelong learning.
- Boys and girls enjoy the subject and take a full part in lessons.

Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 pupils are provided with a good range of experiences to promote their creative development. The pupils learn how to develop their ideas over time using a range of media. For example, the pupils make leaf drawings in pencil, oil pastel and fabric crayon and investigate the effect of colour washes on their work.
- Space inside the building is very limited for imaginative play, building, dance and making art on a large scale but this is fully compensated for through teachers' imaginative use of the play spaces outside.
- Lessons are efficiently organised and well resourced.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively. In all lessons seen, pupils behave very well and use tools and materials carefully. The school's 'have a go' ethos inspires confidence and a sense of self worth in pupils so that they work without inhibition.
- Teachers plan pupils' work carefully using the school's chosen scheme of work ensuring that it builds on what they know and can do.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because their individual needs and abilities are taken fully into account in teaching. Whilst teachers are fully aware of those pupils who are

most able in the subject these pupils usually begin working from the same starting points as others.

- Assessment systems are currently being developed. Evaluation of each taught unit of work is too broad lacking sufficient detail of the progress made by individuals. However, the subject leaders are piloting alternatives to secure more precision. This is work in progress and has some way to go before it impacts on teaching and learning across the school.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- All statutory requirements in the subject are fully met and the curriculum builds securely on pupils' prior experience and attainment.
- Links with other subjects especially history, English and religious education are developing well. The school's focus on eco-schools extends into the subject where pupils use recyclable materials in their art through environmentally based projects.
- Flexible use is made of the scheme of work to ensure that the curriculum is responsive to pupils' interests and experiences.
- The school's aims include an explicit statement of intent for every child to be given the opportunity to visit museums and galleries. These visits enrich and extend pupils' experiences in the subject. For example, following a visit to the Sainsbury Centre to look at art and crafts from European countries one pupil described a piece as 'filled with colour and soft as a bed zzzzzzzzzzz!'.
zzzzzzzzzz!
- Pupils are given a range of opportunities to use computer software to explore colour and pattern and regularly use the internet to research artists' work.
- The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to be involved in purposeful creative activity and to have a say in what they would like to make. Recently the school council put forward an idea to revamp an area with hand painted tiles. The skills of a local artist were employed to support pupils in the project leading to some very original designs to enhance the school's interior.

Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management in art and design are good.

- Two subject leaders work very effectively together and lead the subject well. They ensure that they monitor the effectiveness of the subject across key stages by teaching the subject, scrutinizing planning and observing lessons outside their designated class teaching areas.
- They have developed a clear vision for the subject taking on the role with commitment, enthusiasm and passion. They know the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and have identified assessment as an area for improvement that has been written into the school's development plan with the full support of the headteacher and governors.
- Good links exist between the pre-school and the local high school strengthening transition for pupils. For example, secondary students

show pupils portfolios of their work and invite them to visit their exhibitions.

- Portfolios of work provide a useful reference point for teachers to use in future planning. However, annotations on pupils' work relate to what they do rather than how well they do it.
- The leaders take pupils' views fully into account checking that they are developing positive attitudes towards the subject.
- The school's policy reflects 'Every Child Matters' and fully translates into practice.

Subject issue: the quality of assessment and its impact on pupils' progress and creativity

This is satisfactory.

- In the Foundation Stage assessment is used effectively to swiftly identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses. This information is conveyed to governors to consider funding of additional staffing or other learning resources to accelerate their progress.
- Pupils' holistic performance in each unit of the scheme of work is evaluated to highlight their achievement as a class and to plan next steps in learning. Explicitness of assessment criteria is less advanced and not yet fully embedded in assessment practice.
- Subject leaders are piloting and evaluating ways of including more information about individuals' attainment in relation to National Curriculum levels.
- Pupils are given regular opportunities to discuss their work with teachers and convey their feelings about the subject.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- apply more rigour in assessing pupils' work to inform curriculum planning and to evaluate how well they are doing in relation to national expectations
- develop the use of sketchbooks
- ensure that pupils make as good progress in drawing as they do in other processes.

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

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