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Ms J Baker
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Baker

Ofsted survey inspection programme: Creative Learning

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on the 20 November 2008 to look at creative learning.

As outlined in my initial letter, the visit had a particular focus on the ways in which you develop creative learning and the impact this is having on achievement and standards and on children's personal development.

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, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of children's work and observation of activities in the school.

The overall effectiveness of the school's promotion of creative learning was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards and personal development

The school's emphasis on creativity and personal and social and emotional development has resulted in very good conditions for learning. Pupils sit and listen well and make constructive contributions when they can. Children are currently below age-related expectations but observations during the visit and the school's assessment records indicate that pupils make rapid progress. They have quickly settled into life in the nursery and show a tremendous willingness to concentrate on more focused activities. Creative approaches to learning make an important contribution to achievement by providing interesting and exciting contexts in which children develop important skills.

Quality of teaching and learning

Questioning is very effective because adults are highly skilled in using a range of prompts and other strategies to maximise the opportunity for children to respond. More able children are able to give appropriate oral responses and most children are keen to make choices. Children are encouraged to take play seriously through the positive comments adults make when there is evidence of significant learning taking place. The school's artist in residence ensures a flow of interesting and unusual ideas that stimulate staff and children to be creative.

Children frequently work creatively with the high quality and interesting resources provided. They enjoy exploring a wide range of colours, textures, sounds, taste and even smells. They will not forget the opportunity they had to 'paint with fish' and parents greatly appreciate how their wishes for the future are incorporated into their children's creative designs.

Quality of the curriculum

Despite the reduction in the length of the school day the curriculum offers good opportunities for creative learning. Children take full advantage of the large amount of space and the extensive outdoor area. The curriculum is greatly enhanced by frequent visits and stories that often are the stimulus for creative activity. They encourage good questioning, the framing of hypotheses about characters and events, and exploration of situations beyond their immediate experience. When children participate in creative activities every opportunity is taken to encourage the development of functional skills including letter sounds and counting. The school has managed to establish a very extensive resource base that serves many schools and parents in the local area. This provides ready access to a range of resources recycled from local industry.

Leadership and management

Parental involvement was an area for improvement at the last inspection but it now appears to be a significant strength. The school's positive support for personalised and creative learning has improved the self-esteem of parents and children. Aspirations have been increased particularly by events involving music and dance. The acclamation children receive for their creative performances, in front of a range of audiences, is building the confidence of the entire community.

Generally there is effective monitoring and evaluation to ensure impressive levels of consistency. The school is currently improving its use of data so it can monitor more closely the progress made by different groups of pupils. Effective professional development and resourceful management have enabled the school to use the buildings very well to promote creative learning.

Equality and diversity

The setting has successfully ensured the involvement of all parents, regardless to their backgrounds. All ethnic groups make similarly impressive rates of progress. The emphasis on creative activities is particularly effective in ensuring that the progress made by boys compares well to that made by girls.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- fully implement the more effective approach to the use of data to further improve monitoring of the impact of creative approaches to learning on children's progress.

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

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector