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Ms M Lawson
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Dear Ms Lawson

Ofsted survey inspection programme – art, craft and design

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 6 October 2009 to look at work in art, craft 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 pupils' confidence and creativity in drawing.

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 included discussions with staff and pupils; joint observations of teaching and learning in Key Stages 1 and 2 and in the Early Years Foundation Stage with the deputy headteacher; and scrutiny of subject documentation. Examples of pupils' work in sketchbooks, the school's portfolios and on display were analysed.

The overall effectiveness of art, craft and design is satisfactory.

Achievement in art, craft and design

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

- Children in the Nursery make good progress in their creative development from low starting points. Boys and girls learn through carefully designed creative activities how to negotiate and share materials and tools.
- Through Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils make satisfactory progress. Most reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6.

- The pupils draw confidently and work carefully and methodically wasting no time. They talk fondly about their work and why it appeals to them.
- In lessons, pupils show good attitudes and behave well, especially when they are free to apply their knowledge and skills to practical tasks.
- The pupils are less proficient in developing diverse outcomes from similar starting points, rarely taking risks or experimenting.
- Knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, designers and craftspeople from different times and cultures are satisfactory. The current whole-school study of Henri Rousseau's work is firing their imagination and developing their representational drawing skills.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

Teaching of art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- The best teaching is adventurously planned, making good links between art and design and other subjects, particularly literacy.
- Teachers assess pupils' attainment against National Curriculum levels regularly and record their progress satisfactorily. Assessment information is insufficiently used to identify adjustments required in planning to adapt the curriculum to pupils' individual needs.
- The extent to which pupils are encouraged to take responsibility varies but at best promotes responsibility, decision-making and autonomy.
- Balance between learning by watching, listening and practical application is not always achieved.
- Lessons that are dominated by teacher-talk cause some pupils, notably boys, to become restless and lose concentration.
- The ends of lessons focus on what pupils have done rather than evaluating how well they have done it.
- Adults are quick to respond to pupils' needs in lessons and offer sensitive and helpful guidance orally and in written form.
- In sketchbooks, some pupils add their comments to the teacher's, outlining tips to remember next time. Comments sometimes intrude on the ownership and sanctity of work because they are written over it.
- Teachers use a range of interesting examples to highlight approaches, styles and techniques used by artists, designers and craftworkers.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

The curriculum satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of pupils and contributes to their enjoyment of learning.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a good balance of indoor and outdoor activities, led by adults and chosen by the children.

- Overuse of templates, stencils and prepared materials, such as uniform sizes of paper, restricts children's learning through discovery.
- Pupils are introduced to and re-visit a satisfactory range of art, craft and design processes in two and three dimensions.
- The curriculum is currently under review, moving away from discreet subject areas of learning towards integration between subjects.
- Pupils show high levels of interest and enjoyment where art and design and literacy are linked.
- The school is increasing its work with visiting artists to encourage and promote pupils' creativity. A successful Creative Partnerships project involved Year 2 pupils in choosing their 'creative agents' who inspired a giant wooden structure. The project promoted parents' involvement, assisting pupils in erecting tents, tepees and shelters.
- Pupils are offered display space in school for art that they have created independently at home.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well in class so that they access the full range of curriculum activities.
- The most talented pupils are not benefiting from additional activities or different starting points and/or challenges in lessons.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- Following a lengthy period without a subject leader, the role has recently been taken up by a leader experienced in other subjects.
- It is too early to judge the impact of her subject evaluation on improving provision and outcomes.
- You and the deputy headteacher are driving forward the creativity agenda with commitment and ambition to enrich learning more widely.
- Senior staff are supportive of staff in being adventurous, trialling new approaches and developing pupils' confidence and independence.
- The senior and subject leaders promote confidence in other staff, by providing just the right levels of support to ensure success.
- Staff have insufficient access to examples that illustrate progression, for example through an annotated portfolio.
- Subject monitoring under the creative arts leadership team has not evaluated standards and achievement sufficiently rigorously.
- Links with other schools and local art networks are underdeveloped.

Subject issue: How effectively do pupils learn how to draw confidently and creatively?

This is satisfactory.

- Pupils use their sketchbooks regularly to capture ideas, make observations and practise drawing skills.
- They draw from memory, observation and imagination in response to the familiar and unfamiliar world.
- Drawing activities frequently promote pupils' understanding of different cultures and countries, for example through exploring Aboriginal art.
- Pupils enjoy drawing, working with sustained concentration. They use evaluation well, expressing their opinions and preferences freely.
- Opportunities are missed to promote drawing through collaborative activities or through choice of a range of drawing tools.
- Pupils frequently use the standard writing grip to draw, rarely experimenting with different ways of manipulating mark-making tools.

Examples of good practice, which we discussed:

- Visiting artists and large-scale creative projects have generated high levels of interest and enjoyment from pupils and their parents
- Through Creative Partnerships, pupils learned new craft skills and developed their skills as team players, learning to think like a designer.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing teachers' understanding of progression
- increasing opportunities for experimentation and learning by discovery
- providing a broader range of materials and tools for pupils to choose.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop art, craft 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