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Mrs M Nelson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Nelson

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: art, craft and design

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 7 December 2009 to look at the school's provision for developing pupils' creativity in art, craft 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 the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with you, the subject leader and the Schools Art Partnership Leader from Churchdown Visual Arts College; discussions with pupils; a tour of the school; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of pupils working in lessons.

Features of good practice

- Dynamic and passionate subject leadership fused with visionary direction from senior leaders strongly promotes creativity. It is deeply rooted in the school's work and understood by staff and pupils alike.
- Innovation and risk-taking are revered as essential elements for good learning, teaching and curriculum planning that support pupils in achieving joy and success. The pupils are exuberant about their work; fearless of challenge and originality.
- The curriculum and subsequent scheme of work used in curriculum planning are tailor-made to meet pupils' needs and reflect their interests. Gifted and talented pupils benefit from master-classes and workshops delivered by specialists to fire their enthusiasm and sharpen their skills. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities thrive in the Success Centre – a hub of learning where pupils use diverse and creative

approaches in exploring and responding to the world around them. All pupils are regularly engaged in creative activities driven by staff who have developed the skills and confidence to capitalise on the unexpected and encourage pupils to improvise and develop creative attributes.

- There are plentiful opportunities for pupils to learn from living artists, specialist teachers and each other. Excellent links with the feeder infant school and the local specialist arts college enable free-flow exchanges of ideas and expertise. An exemplary example is the wall-hanging project where pupils from the infant and junior schools worked collaboratively to produce 'Longlevens Street', a lasting piece representing the local area. The arts college advised the input of a textile artist hired through local business sponsorship. Pupils were introduced to Fauvism, the inspiration for their vibrant colour choices apparent in the finished piece. Hung in the local church for a time, families of those involved attended a service in celebration of the project.
- Artists, designers and craftworkers work alongside pupils frequently, developing their creative practice. These rich experiences add to their repertoire of skills in using 2D, 3D, digital and mixed-media on a variety of scales.
- Staff and pupils work together to learn new techniques and processes. They take up opportunities to attend out-of-hours workshops at the specialist art college where they learn new skills using high-quality resources. Their art is displayed imaginatively and sensitively at school where pupils' work is exhibited alongside the adults. Perceptive subject leadership identifies where staff need professional development to build their confidence in trying new things in the classroom. Returning from a print-making workshop one teacher commented, 'I am trying this out with my class. I hope it works but it might be a complete disaster'.
- Meaningful links are developed with other subjects to deepen pupils' understanding. For example, a study of Kandinsky and Escher's art provided the starting point for a mathematics lesson based on the properties of shape. Their awe and wonder was apparent as they began to discover hidden shapes. Keen to develop this approach to nurture pupils' motivation in mathematics, the same teacher is running a well-attended after-school 'Art in mathematics club' where pupils engage in similar activities and consider 'Is it art or is it mathematics?'
- Central to the high standards achieved by most pupils is meticulous and diligent subject monitoring to ensure that alongside innovation, key skills are taught systematically and re-visited at pertinent milestones. This secures progression in skills development. Pupils' progress is monitored and they contribute to assessments using criteria written in child-friendly language to guide their judgements.
- Visually exciting displays demonstrate the school's commitment to celebrating pupils' achievement in the subject. These stimulate curiosity and contribute to the enriched environment for learning.
- The subject plays a major part in developing pupils' personal skills and well-being. All pupils have their chance to shine, including those who are

especially artistic or creative. This builds their self-esteem and gives recognition to their achievements.

- The visual dimension of art, craft and design pervades the whole school and is driven by ambitious subject leadership that goes beyond that expected to enable pupils to flourish and achieve with a deep sense of satisfaction.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- further developing pupils' drawing and painting skills to match the high standards achieved in other processes
- including more female artists, designers and craftworkers in the scheme of work.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the subject in 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

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector