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Dear Mr O'Neill

Ofsted 2010-11 subject 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 27 May 2010 to look at work 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of seven lessons, including one lesson observed jointly with you.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

Pupils' achievement in art, craft and design is satisfactory with good features.

- Children's creative development is outstanding during the Early Years Foundation Stage because of the very high quality support provided. From low starting points, most reach the level expected by the time they join Year 1 and establish solid foundations for later learning.
- Between Years 1 and 6, progress is satisfactory and pupils' attainment is in line with that seen nationally by the time they leave. They continue to enjoy the subject and their behaviour is excellent. However, teaching is less effective than in the Early Years Foundation Stage in imparting subject-specific skills and knowledge or meeting the needs of each pupil.
- Pupils enjoy exploring different materials. For example, Year 1 pupils responded well when manipulating modelling clay to make relief images based on flowers, and mixed-media models of toys by Year 5 showed

inventiveness. However, pupils' understanding of the characteristics of effective work, or how other artists approach the type of activity they are involved in, is inconsistent. This limits their ability to exploit materials or techniques used to communicate ideas or express feelings.

- Drawing skills are at the level expected by Year 6. Pupils enjoy working from direct observation and from imaginative sources. Progress is good where tasks have a clear purpose and link well to the work of other artists or designers. For example, Year 4 pupils made accurately observed drawings of chairs before developing imaginary designs. In other lessons, however, pupils did not always understand sufficiently well how to use drawing processes to gather information or develop and express ideas.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

The quality of teaching of art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- Teachers and other staff are enthusiastic in their teaching. They work hard to prepare resources and ideas for lessons and projects. Classrooms are well organised for practical work and to support learning, for example through displays. Teachers' confident use of interactive whiteboards to show images of artists' work promotes discussion.
- Activities in lessons build in logical sequences over time. Some lessons are planned well to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities, including the high proportion speaking English as an additional language. This is very evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage where each child's needs and progress are monitored closely. In other years, teachers have a broad awareness of pupils' attainment but do not systematically plan to enable them to work towards a challenging target in the subject.
- Introductions by teachers to the work of other artists and to technical aspects of processes are satisfactory. There are examples of good practice but also instances where techniques and/or important aspects of artists' work are not explained clearly. This means pupils are not always sure of what it is they are aiming to achieve and or how to improve their work.
- Feedback and guidance to pupils are satisfactory. Verbal feedback is regular with one-to-one discussion helping sustain pupils' focus. However, it does not always identify misconceptions so that they can be tackled.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

The quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design is good.

- The curriculum ensures pupils work on a wide range of scales in both two- and three-dimensions in art, craft and design disciplines. They have good opportunities to draw in different ways, including from observation, memory and imagination and view drawing as an important aspect of the subject as a result.
- Enrichment of the subject is good and staff make the most of the school's location. National collections and historic buildings are close by and these

regularly underpin subject work. For example, many pupils visit the National Gallery or Hampton Court Palace as part of their projects.

- The school works hard to ensure pupils have good opportunities to work with practising artists, both through practitioners visiting the school or through off-site visits, such as that by Year 6 pupils to the Photographers' Gallery. These direct contacts have a good impact on pupils' learning, but are not used fully to develop teachers' subject knowledge and foster longer term impact.
- Cross-curricular themes are used well to support subject learning. Many of the links are imaginative and have developed well over time to appeal to the pupils and reinforce learning, as, for example, in the Year 4 pupils' fantasy chair designs, completed as part of a topic on 'imaginary worlds'.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of art, craft and design

The leadership and management of art, craft and design are satisfactory.

- Subject leaders are passionate, committed to the subject and ensure it is a highly visible aspect of school life. This has led to improvements in the curriculum, notably through more cross-curricular work and effective use of local resources. These developments reflect school-wide priorities to provide coherent experiences which broaden pupils' understanding of the world around them.
- Resources are well managed and organised through good teamwork between staff. The environment is used well to celebrate the subject so that display areas reflect the work of each class.
- Strategic planning includes most of the areas which require development, and links well to a cycle of evaluation. Monitoring of teaching is satisfactory, with regular scrutiny of planning and discussions with staff ensuring satisfactory overall progress in learning. However, the quality of pupils' classroom experiences and their progress over time are not checked systematically enough to identify improvements, share best practice or check the progress made by different groups of pupils. As a result, these issues are underrepresented in development plans.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving progress between Years 1 and 6 and sustaining the strong start made in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring demonstrations of technique and introductions to the approaches used by other artists are of consistently high quality
 - matching the content of lessons more closely to the needs of all pupils, so that they reach a challenging target over their time at school
- improving the impact of subject leaders on teaching by:

- monitoring more closely the quality of lessons and the progress made by pupils over time
- ensuring staff share best practice and make more use of practising artists' expertise to enhance their subject knowledge.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop art, craft and design in the 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 under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector