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Headteacher
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Dear Miss Roberts

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 18 and 19 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, observation of five lessons and a celebration assembly.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

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

- In Nursery and Reception classes, children make good progress exploring and responding to a wide range of well-designed activities that promotes their creative development. Boys and girls are able to record observations carefully, express their imagination confidently and develop ideas independently, through a range of two- and three-dimensional and digital media.
- In Years 1 to 3, past and present work indicates that good progress is maintained. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, develop a fascination for the lives and work of other artists. For example, Year 2 pupils accurately described the characteristics of the

work of Henri Matisse, Bridget Riley and Frank Stella. In assembly, pupils proudly shared work that they had been inspired to continue at home.

- While the overall impact of class displays is impressive, individually the standards achieved in Key Stage 2 are average. Pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in the subject are not as well developed in relation to their age and ability as that of younger pupils. Despite some frustration at focusing on the subject too infrequently, pupils remain enthusiastic. Individual pupils pursue art-related interests at home or art club, and some express the profound importance of art for their well-being.
- The variable quality and quantity of pupils' work in sketchbooks, started in Year 3, does not always support the development of their artistic, critical or creative skills. However, Year 6 pupils were observed working intensively and experimentally, inspired by a visit to the Sealife Centre in Birmingham in which they had recorded their experiences spontaneously.
- The subject makes a clear contribution to the inclusion of different groups into the school community. Pupils display positive attitudes about their own achievement and that of others, and work safely, thoughtfully, collaboratively and independently. Where their personal qualities are applied to the subject, for example expressing sensitivity to their surroundings or showing empathy for war artists, standards are higher.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

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

- Teachers use different stimuli well as a starting point for practical work. For example, Year 1 pupils explored a wide range of natural materials following a presentation of Andy Goldsworthy's work and visit to 'Birches Valley' at Cannock Chase. However, the distinctive features of artists' work are not made explicit in all years, focusing more on facts about artists' lives. This limits the development of their critical skills and understanding about the importance of developing originality in their own work.
- Teachers support pupils through well-prepared activities, encouragement and advice, and thoughtfully timed sharing of pupils' work. However, as pupils progress through the school, too little use is made of the range of information collected through individual pupils' responses early on. Levels of challenge remain similar for pupils with different abilities and the good examples of constructive criticism recorded in sketchbooks are infrequent.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- The curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to visit an art gallery, work with a practising artist and work with the subject leader at art club. The school is aware that long-term planning requires further development to promote pupils' progress in two-, three-dimensional and digital media, all areas that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage at the school develop confidence and independence in using. The most successful

schemes of work have been adapted to the school, for example the QCA 'Talking textiles' unit in the context of St Luke's church. However, opportunities are missed to develop and apply skills in the subject, for example Year 5 pupils' poetry about the creation in response to imagery.

- The development of drawing as a key subject skill to record observations, express ideas and recall memories is supported by some structured sketchbook work in Years 3 to 6. However, sketchbooks are underdeveloped as an opportunity to promote curriculum continuity across years and subjects, and between home and school. Pupils said they would welcome further guidance about useful activities to pursue out of school.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of art, craft and design

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

- In line with other subjects, documentation is closely related to the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes. Subject-specific aims are appropriate, identifying opportunities to make a distinctive contribution to pupils' achievement, personal development and well-being. However, development planning in the subject is insufficiently precise in identifying targets for improvement and the steps to achieve and evaluate them.
- Subject monitoring draws on a range of evidence, including the views of staff and pupils. Feedback has been used effectively to ensure that lessons are suitably resourced. However, evaluation of the standards attained by pupils in all years is insufficient. You make higher standards clear through use of assembly and lesson support. Nevertheless, the subject portfolio, while providing some exemplification, indicates too little about the quality of different pupils' responses to support the non-specialist.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the standards attained, particularly by the older pupils by:
 - using assessment information to inform lesson planning
 - teaching pupils how to review, modify and refine their work
 - developing the use of sketchbooks across and out of school
- increasing the impact of subject leadership and management by:
 - structuring curriculum progression in practical and critical skills
 - making the standards expected of pupils at different stages more explicit
 - identifying subject-specific targets and reviewing progress evaluatively.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop art, craft and design across 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 your next institutional inspection team.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector