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Mr D Turvey
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Turvey

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 1 July 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 without their consent.

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 part-lessons, including two joint observations with you.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

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

- From an average overall starting point, children's creative development in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Boys and girls establish a strong base of skills by visually responding to their experiences. They learn to use a wide range of processes well, with notable strength in the use of mixed media to make images and three-dimensional work.
- Progress is good between Years 1 and 6 and pupils' attainment is above average by the time they leave. They continue to enjoy the subject, working hard in lessons and behaving well but teaching is not as highly effective in moving each pupil forward as it is when they are younger.

- Pupils' skills in handling a range of materials and processes are good. Particular features of their work, when older, continue to be in mixed media, such as using found objects and natural materials to make constructions and reliefs, alongside the use of computer-based visual packages. In both areas, pupils are keen to innovate and explore the possibilities offered.
- Through regular exposure to the work of other creative practitioners, pupils develop a good understanding of the importance of referring to the work of others. They make good use of what they learn, producing work which is influenced by what they have seen rather than being a pastiche of it.
- Drawing skills develop well across a variety of uses but notably when working imaginatively, for example to produce design ideas. Pupils are less confident in working from direct observation. Occasionally, this hinders their ability to record what they see to provide a basis for later stages of projects, and their ability to refine and develop their work.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

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

- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is very closely matched to children's individual needs through ongoing assessment of their progress. Outstanding staff teamwork means children are skilfully supported in their creative development through a balance of adult-led and child-selected activities both inside and outside the classroom.
- In older year groups, teachers are equally enthusiastic. They work hard to prepare lessons and have very good class management skills. This means they are able to be innovative to make learning interesting. This was seen when the Year 2 teacher used a 'visualiser' to examine a spider with her class and Year 1 pupils were taken to work outside in woodland.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have good subject knowledge overall and work well together. Some teaching assistants have subject-specific expertise and this is used effectively to support their colleagues and when working with pupils. They also make a good contribution to the achievement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities through supporting them in class.
- Assessment is used well to monitor pupils' overall progress and plan work for classes. However, some opportunities are missed to tailor lesson activities to pupils' differing needs. This is most evident in discussions. These are a regular feature of lessons but do not always involve questioning at appropriately varied levels for different pupils. Equally, tasks in practical stages are often, but not always, matched to pupils' differing skill levels or to teachers' expectations of what each should achieve.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- Pupils have access to a very wide and stimulating range of opportunities in the subject. These have been adapted thoughtfully over time to sustain and develop pupils' enjoyment and give the work produced a unique character which reflects the school, its location and the pupils themselves.
- The curriculum is planned carefully to ensure pupils' experiences build securely and are exciting. The balance of art, craft and design activities and work on different scales and dimensions is excellent. A rich range of displays, including whole-school art exhibitions, are used to celebrate success and help pupils understand how work is viewed by an audience.
- Pupils are encouraged to draw regularly and build confidence in working from memory and imagination. They understand well that drawing underpins much of their work. For example, very young children as well as older ones made site-specific pieces with natural objects but were aware they were drawing, albeit with unusual materials. Opportunities to draw from direct observation are good but less comprehensively planned.
- There are great strengths in links with other curriculum areas, particularly through extended projects. Work was seen where pupils used their subject skills to make models in history and design programmes for a drama production. These projects do much to place pupils' learning in a 'real life' context and encourage their independence as learners.
- Connections with museums and galleries are sustained well. Typical of this was work done just before the inspection. Pupils from different years had worked with a local museum to study artefacts and make their own high quality pieces inspired by clothing design. Activities of this kind contribute greatly to pupils' direct experiences of creative practitioners' work.
- The school works hard to give pupils access to enrichment activities. The very popular art clubs, run by the teaching assistants, offer excellent opportunities for pupils of all abilities to extend their classwork and/or develop new directions in their work.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of art, craft and design

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

- The joint subject leaders are energetic and committed to the subject. They provide clear direction for its development, balancing well the need to provide a structure for their colleagues' planning while allowing them room for innovation in the way they teach.
- Effective monitoring of provision involves the scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work, alongside pupils' discussions and analysis of assessment data. The outcomes are used well to identify areas for improvement in strategic plans and to offer feedback to colleagues. The good impact is evident in the well-developed curriculum and in pupils' achievement.
- Subject leaders are proactive in supporting their colleagues' subject knowledge. They engender good teamwork among staff, including sharing ideas and skills. They and their colleagues work hard to make contacts outside the school, leading to the work with the local museum. The subject is also used to make links with the local community in other ways.

For example, the residents of the local area were invited to the pupils' exhibition and pupils will be participating in a local festival parade.

- A folio, exemplifying pupils' work at different levels, is kept and is useful in helping teachers to understand the overall level pupils are expected to work at for their ages. However, the work included does not show progression systematically through different processes to help teachers understand more precisely what level of performance to expect and encourage when pupils are using the processes concerned.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving pupils' achievement further between Years 1 and 6 by:
 - ensuring activities are planned consistently well in lessons to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities
 - developing pupils' observational drawing skills more systematically
 - improving teachers' awareness of progression in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding across the full range of processes they use.

I hope that 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