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25 March 2011

Mr A Fletcher
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Fletcher

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: art, craft and design

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of staff and pupils, during my visit on 15 March 2011 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 lessons.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

Achievement in art, craft and design is good.

- Pupils make good progress in lessons and enjoy their work. The subject makes a good contribution to improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes as they learn to persevere and complete tasks. Many pupils are proud of what they achieve and were keen to explain the work on display in corridors and the hall.
- With support from adults, pupils learn well how to manipulate materials and explore their properties. They respond positively when combining materials, as when making masks or kites. They make outstanding progress in learning to respect the resources and equipment that they use.
- Through image-making, pupils often make significant gains in addressing issues affecting their lives. This includes working individually with staff to visually represent feelings and enable dialogue about their responses.

- Pupils' confidence as learners is below average and presents a challenge for many when refining and developing their work. They make good progress in building these skills by working closely with adults, but this area remains relatively weak for many.
- Pupils respond strongly to learning about approaches used by other creative practitioners. They make good use of what they learn, particularly when seeing artists working at first hand, as when making mosaic inlaid benches in the play area.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

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

- Staff work well as a team and approach lessons with enthusiasm and high expectations. They sustain positive and caring relationships with pupils, establishing boundaries and using praise to set consistent expectations for pupils' behaviour.
- Classrooms are well organised to enable use of a good range of potentially messy materials. The clear organisation of storage and work spaces helps pupils to learn about good work routines. Displays are used to celebrate success and support learning, which pupils find motivating.
- Lessons are well structured to sustain pupils' focus in discussions and practical tasks. Staff skilfully adapt activities around pupils' responses, curtailing or extending stages to sustain the pace of learning. The flow from pastoral time, such as eating a communal breakfast, into art activities is very effective in helping pupils settle into their learning.
- Learning objectives and practical tasks are explained clearly to pupils, including through demonstrations. Discussion is used well to develop and check pupils' understanding and enhance their oral skills.
- Staff keep detailed records of each pupil's progress. Although these are used carefully to plan lessons around their behavioural targets, they are used less effectively to adapt lessons based on pupils' varying subject attainment. Tasks and staff guidance are not always adapted with the precision needed to ensure that pupils make maximum progress.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- The subject curriculum is linked well with wider 'arts' learning. A common approach to creativity has grown across the visual and performing arts, helping pupils to build their awareness of shared features of being creative. Useful links are also made to other subjects, such as drawing plants as part of a science project.
- The curriculum is mapped carefully to cover different materials and processes including drawing using computers, work on different scales and work in two and three dimensions. Pupils are offered a good balance of opportunities to work from direct experience and secondary sources.

- Most pupils respond well to the subject curriculum and look forward to art activities. Some good adaptations are made based on pupils' responses and the school's location. For example, pupils enjoyed making maps of the area and showing a journey round the city. However, some opportunities are missed to address pupils' individual interests through the curriculum.
- Satisfactory steps are taken to enrich pupils' experiences by working with creative practitioners. The school has rightly identified the benefits of such experiences where they have been offered and is well focused on developing this as a priority.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of art, craft and design

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

- Subject leadership makes a good impact. The subject is a valued part of the curriculum and contributes well to the school's central role in helping pupils develop positive attitudes to learning.
- Strategic planning identifies accurate subject improvement goals. A good range of monitoring, including work and planning scrutiny, and tracking of pupils' progress, underpins secure subject evaluation. However, some success criteria in development plans are not precise enough to ensure that the impact of initiatives on pupils can be checked.
- Staff development is effective in improving the quality of provision. Training sessions, such as those associated with creativity across the curriculum, make a good impact. Staff work well together to share ideas for teaching so as to manage the roles that most have in leading different areas of the school's work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving teaching by ensuring that lesson tasks and staff discussions with pupils focus more precisely on their individual targets in the subject
- deepening the impact of the curriculum by tailoring learning more closely around the pupils' own interests
- enhancing subject leadership by ensuring that all improvement actions have measurable outcomes for pupils so that their effectiveness can be checked and the next steps planned.

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 published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector