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Mrs J O'Connor  
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Dear Mrs O'Connor

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 January 2008 to look at work in art and design.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the quality of assessment and its impact on pupils' progress and creativity.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and short observations of eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of art and design was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- On entry, pupils' creative skills are well below expectations. They make steady progress in art and design over time leading to satisfactory achievement overall.
- A good range of activities on offer in the Foundation Stage, both inside and outdoors, engage the children in creative play. There is a buzz of industry in the area, with children engrossed in purposeful and interesting pursuits. These are carefully planned to develop their skills and creativity and, as a result, they make good progress.

- In Key Stage 1 pupils use tools and manipulate materials with adequate control. At this stage, much of their achievement is linked to skills development. For these pupils, limited choice and often uninspiring materials leads to a lack of sparkle and creativity in the subject.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 are taught skills progressively and make satisfactory progress. However, the lack of sketchbooks limits their ability to explore and develop ideas or gather a repertoire of techniques to refer to and revisit in future work. Completed art work lacks individuality as a result.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils work confidently in design. They use ICT particularly well to experiment with colour, shape and pattern enabling them to achieve average standards in their work.
- In all lessons seen, pupils behave well. Nevertheless, opportunities are too few for them to work collaboratively to develop their confidence in sharing ideas and evaluating their own and each others' work.
- Across the school pupils have satisfactory understanding and knowledge of the work of artists, designers and craftworkers from different times, cultures and countries.

#### Quality of teaching and learning of art and design

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- The best teaching allows pupils to make choices and experiment but this is an inconsistent feature of learning. When pupils have insufficient opportunity to develop their ideas over time, some are daunted by the task before them and are hesitant in making a start.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively ensuring that they work safely and waste no time. Support staff and volunteers are deployed effectively to support pupils learning.
- Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge and plan the pupils' work according the National Curriculum requirements. The planning is activity-driven with insufficient emphasis on learning. Nonetheless, pupils know what they have to do and complete their work to a reasonable standard.
- The school has identified assessment as an area for development this year. Pupils' are currently unsure about how to improve or develop their work.
- Teachers use opportunities to develop pupils' art and design skills in the context of other subjects effectively. For example, the creation of a 'Walk of Faith' display in one corridor features ongoing pupils' work inspired by studies of different world religions. It makes an eye-catching focal point that provokes discussion by adults and pupils and raises the profile of the subject.

#### Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- Curriculum planning follows the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum ensuring that pupils are taught what they should.
- Pupils have opportunities to work with specialists and take part in clubs and visits to museums or galleries. This extends and broadens their experiences in the subject satisfactorily.
- Pupils' art work is exhibited to a consistently good standard reflecting the value that the school places on the subject.
- The school capitalises on the skills and expertise of individuals in the school's immediate and wider community, welcoming them into school to work with pupils.

## Leadership and management of art and design

Leadership and management in art and design are satisfactory.

- The new subject leader has sufficient subject knowledge and the necessary leadership skills to secure improvement in art and design. As an advocate of creativity and learning by doing, the subject leader is keen to inject more choice into the curriculum and to develop teachers' knowledge, skills and understanding to improve assessment practices and raise standards.
- The subject leader monitors curriculum plans effectively and undertakes work scrutiny to evaluate standards.
- A positive start has been made on an overall audit of the subject. This informs the school's secure action plan for future improvement.
- The subject leader makes very effective use of ICT to support teachers in planning and assessment. For example, links to national websites have been posted on the school's intranet to direct staff towards useful resources and exemplification materials.
- Assessment has rightly been identified as an area for improvement. In response, activities are underway to develop teachers' expertise in assessing pupils' work such as art workshops led by a subject specialist. It is too soon to see any notable improvement in standards.
- Governors have a good understanding and knowledge of how the subject is taught in school through regular visits and involvement in the school.

Subject issue: the quality of assessment and its impact on pupils' progress and creativity.

- Assessment systems are underdeveloped. The school's leadership and management are aware of this and strategies to improve teachers' skills in levelling pupils' work are underway.
- In curriculum planning, differentiation is by outcome or additional support. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are guided and supported very well enabling them to fully access the curriculum. Those with special gifts and talents however, are insufficiently catered for in lessons.
- Once they leave the Foundation Stage there is not enough scope for pupils to experiment or explore the potential of materials and media.

This has an impact on their creativity and the originality seen in pupils' work.

## Inclusion

- Teachers recognise the needs of students who have learning difficulties or disabilities and ensure that they are supported well in lessons.
- Tasks are not always differentiated enough to challenge the higher attaining pupils.
- The subject makes a major contribution to improving vulnerable pupils' emotional well-being and behaviour. Art workshops, run at lunch time, provide opportunities for therapeutic art activities that the pupils enjoy. This has been successful in reducing incidents of disruptive behaviour by pupils who display challenging behaviour.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- introduce and develop the use of sketchbooks
- devise systematic procedures for assessing and levelling pupils' work against the National Curriculum attainment targets
- promote more creativity by increasing opportunities for pupils to experiment and make choices
- extend the range of resources, media and materials for pupils to explore.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop art and design in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, 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