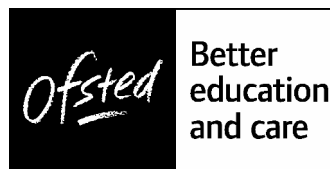


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18 October 2006

Mrs C Thomas
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Thomas

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme 2006 – art, craft and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10 October 2006 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 should we wish to cite specific aspects of practice we will contact the school first. All school 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 observation of lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- From a below average starting point on entry, children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress in their creative development. They enjoy creative activities, working carefully and with sustained interest to complete each task. They notice what adults do and imitate them but they are less able to experiment widely or communicate their ideas expressively.

- In Key Stage 1, the children confidently develop ideas from their imagination and from observation or direct experience using a range of media. They express their preferences about the media they use satisfactorily and enjoy the subject. They use computers adequately to make simple designs.
- Throughout Key Stage 2 the children continue to make satisfactory progress. They work productively in groups on collaborative projects often using mixed-media to good effect but rarely on a large scale or in three dimensions. They work with precision and care. Their drawing is increasingly sophisticated and detailed. They have limited understanding of designers, artists and craftspeople.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with some good features.

- Strengths of teaching observed included well planned lessons with good structure and pace. The children have positive attitudes towards the subject and expectations are high for them to behave and achieve well. However, the teaching is heavily adult directed with missed opportunities for children to investigate the versatility of the media and tools they use in order to develop original ideas or outcomes. During lessons the children receive constructive feedback and guidance about their work that helps them to improve it.
- The children talk enthusiastically about the school's termly Arts Week and present their associated art work with pride to their families and visitors. However, in talking about their work they are unable to use subject specific vocabulary or refer to many artists, craftspeople or designers. The children use sketchbooks to draft ideas, record techniques and practise drawing but there is inconsistency in how effectively and regularly they are used across the school.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum caters for the needs and abilities of all learners well.

- The curriculum is enriched with themed weeks when artists and craftworkers, often from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds, inspire and enthuse the children with their specialisms. These first hand experiences contribute to children's enjoyment of the subject and to improving the quality of their work.
- Good support is provided for children with learning difficulties and disabilities enabling them to progress and develop well.
- The school has developed effective links with the local arts college and specialist art teachers and students from the school regularly work with the children.
- A range of out-of-hours clubs are well attended and provide additional opportunities for children to engage in creative activities.
- Visits to local or national galleries to develop children's knowledge and understanding of artists, craftspeople and designers are infrequent.

Leadership and management of subject

Leadership and management in the subject is good.

- The subject leader evaluates the subject well and through regular self evaluation knows precisely where strengths exist and areas for improvement are apparent.
- Regular checks are made of teachers' planning to ensure that knowledge, skills and understanding are taught systematically and to identify areas where teachers need further training.
- Regular scrutiny of children's work enables the subject leader to keep a watchful eye on standards and the quality of displays.
- The annual action plan for the subject is based on valuable information from monitoring activities. Priorities for future development are established and communicated effectively to staff and governors.
- Resources are well organised and managed.

Subject issue

The subject has a high profile and it makes a positive contribution to the children's overall enjoyment and achievement. For example, the introduction of themed Arts Weeks coincides with considerable improvement in the progress that children have made recently in the core subjects. However, the tendency for adults to over direct activities constrains the children's creative development and inhibits originality.

Inclusion

The school is inclusive. In planning cross-curricular themes for study, careful consideration is given to providing a balance of content to engage and motivate boys and girls. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities have full access to the curriculum and make good progress. The school successfully develops the children's cultural awareness by providing good opportunities for the study of art, craft and design from different times, cultures and countries.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- provide opportunities for children to explore the creative potential of media, tools, techniques and their own imagination
- develop children's use of subject specific vocabulary and their knowledge of artists, craftspeople and designers
- make the effective use of sketchbooks consistent.

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

As 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