

## The Monitoring Role of Art Subject Leaders in Primary Schools

By

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*The views and opinions contained in this briefing paper are those held by Chalice Arts UK which the author hopes will inform the discussion around the subject leadership of art and ultimately help lead to higher standards of art and design education in primary schools.*

The most effective art subject leaders or co-ordinators have a good and accurate knowledge of the standards of achievement in art and the quality of teaching in art throughout their school, including the early years. They and their Head teachers take this responsibility very seriously.

It is only by having this knowledge that you can really lead the subject effectively. This knowledge enables you to accurately undertake subject self-evaluation, development planning, appropriate resourcing, making adaptations to the curriculum, organising appropriate INSET and raising expectations etc.

My advice is for you to use, as your starting point, the current OFSTED Framework. Look carefully at the Grade Descriptors for outstanding and good in the following areas:

- Overall effectiveness: the quality of education provided by the school;
- Quality of leadership in and management of the school;
- Quality of teaching in the school
- Achievement of pupils at the school

I hope it will be very clear to you that there is a great deal of relevance in these descriptors for you as the leader of art within your school.

It is really useful if the Head teacher and art subject leader can come to a shared understanding of which descriptors are most relevant to art within the school so that you as a subject leader are appropriately supported to fulfil your role. I say this because, in some schools, the art subject leader does not undertake monitoring and therefore they do not truly lead the subject. Imagine an inspector observing an art lesson, scrutinising work and coming to the conclusion that the art curriculum was not effective, teaching was requiring improvement or inadequate and leadership and management of the subject were the same. Would this kind of judgement effect the overall inspection outcome? Certainly if teaching were requiring improvement and this was reflected in leadership and management requiring improvement it certainly would be doing the school no favours at all particularly if they were aiming to achieve an outstanding inspection grade overall. Art lessons may not always be observed during a short two day inspection but if the quality of artwork displayed around the school or stored in pupils' portfolios/ sketch books was not age appropriate then this may well be seen by inspectors and lead to searching questions about provision, quality of teaching and quality of leadership in art. It is therefore, in my view, extremely important for art to be monitored with the same or similar rigor as other subjects within the curriculum.

The grade descriptors for the quality of leadership and management are found below. Parts are highlighted that are relevant to subject leaders. As a leader of art these statements are also as relevant to you as they

are to any other subject leader. You are responsible for the quality of the curriculum and its resourcing, quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in art.

I would urge you to look at the grade descriptors for those areas mentioned above and highlight those relevant to your role. You will see a large number of them are relevant to you and your subject. This exercise helps demonstrate that you are accountable under the OFSTED Framework for the area of the curriculum you lead. This would lead to a profitable discussion with your Senior Leadership Team or Head teacher.

## Grade descriptors – Quality of leadership in and management of the school

Note: These descriptors should not be used as a checklist. They must be applied adopting a 'best fit' approach that relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team. There is detailed guidance on evaluating safeguarding arrangements in 'Inspecting safeguarding in maintained schools and academies'.

### Outstanding (1)

- The pursuit of excellence in all of the school's activities is demonstrated by an uncompromising and highly successful drive to strongly improve, or maintain, the highest levels of achievement and personal development for all pupils over a sustained period of time.
- All leaders and managers, including those responsible for governance, are highly ambitious for the pupils and lead by example. They base their actions on a deep and accurate understanding of the school's performance and of staff and pupils' skills and attributes.
- Governors, or those with a similar responsibility, stringently hold senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance.
- Excellent policies underpin practice that ensures that pupils have high levels of literacy, or pupils are making excellent progress in literacy.
- Leaders focus relentlessly on improving teaching and learning and provide focused professional development for all staff, especially those that are newly qualified and at an early stage of their careers. This is underpinned by searching performance management that encourages, challenges and supports teachers' improvement. As a result, the overall quality of teaching is at least consistently good and improving.
- The school's curriculum promotes and sustains a thirst for knowledge and understanding and a love of learning. It covers a wide range of subjects and provides opportunities for academic, technical and sporting excellence. It has a very positive impact on all pupils' behaviour and safety, and contributes very well to pupils' academic achievement, their physical well-being, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school's actions have secured improvement in achievement for disadvantaged pupils, which is rising rapidly, including in English and mathematics.
- The school has highly successful strategies for engaging with parents to the benefit of pupils, including those who find working with the school difficult.
- Senior leaders in the school work to promote improvement across the wider system including, where applicable, with early years providers to raise the proportion of children who are well prepared to start school.
- The school is adept at identifying any child at risk of harm and engaging with partners to respond appropriately. Staff model professional standards in all of their work and demonstrate high levels of respect and courtesy for pupils and others.
- Through highly effective, rigorous planning and controls, governors ensure financial stability, including the effective and efficient management of financial resources such as the pupil premium funding. This leads to the excellent deployment of staff and resources to the benefit of all groups of pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that early years and/or sixth form provision is highly effective.

## Good (2)

- Key leaders and managers, including those responsible for governance, consistently communicate high expectations and ambition.
- Teaching is good and/or improving strongly as a result of accurate monitoring, effective performance management and professional development, which are closely matched to the needs of the school and staff.
- Self-evaluation is thorough and accurate, and the school's actions are carefully planned, concerted and effective.
- Well thought out policies ensure that pupils make at least good progress in literacy.
- Governors, or those in a similar position, systematically challenge senior leaders. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement have improved, or previous good performance in these areas has been consolidated.
- The school's curriculum encourages a thirst for knowledge and understanding and a love of learning. It covers a range of subjects and provides opportunities for academic, technical and sporting excellence. It contributes well to pupils' academic achievement, their physical well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It promotes good behaviour and a good understanding of safety matters.
- The school's actions have secured improvement in achievement for disadvantaged pupils, which is rising, including in English and mathematics.
- The culture of the school is characterised by high expectations and aspirations for all pupils.
- The school works well with parents, including those who might find working with the school difficult, to achieve positive benefits for pupils.
- Leaders ensure that staff are well trained in identifying pupils at risk of harm and responding appropriately. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.
- Governors ensure the efficient management of financial resources. This leads to the effective deployment of staff and resources.
- Leaders work effectively with early years providers and other schools to ensure children's smooth transition into school.
- Leaders have ensured that early years and/or sixth form provision is effective.

Reference - OFSTED School Inspection Handbook, September 2014, No 120101

The role of the art subject leader does vary from school to school. In many schools the post holder may be a fairly new teacher with just a few years of teaching experience and this may be their first leadership role. There are of course many different variations and in some schools there may be an art specialist who has been teaching for many years. The point I am leading onto here is that often undertaking monitoring is very new to many art subject leaders and there may have been very little or even no preparation for this role.

In order to prepare for taking on the level of monitoring responsibility that I am recommending in this paper it is highly advisable to undertake some preparation and CPD to enable you to confidently fulfil the role. For many this will involve undertaking joint monitoring with a more experienced senior member of staff. Shadowing, undertaking joint monitoring, or attending a specific middle management training course that includes training about monitoring is highly recommended. The more you are prepared then the more likely you are to be able to fulfil this very crucial role in leading art confidently.

I am often asked advice about is the level of subject expertise for the art subject leader. I will briefly comment here about this issue. Firstly, enthusiasm and a love of the subject area are crucial. Looking back to the OFSTED grade descriptors we would seek to appoint art subject leaders who have:

**Uncompromising and highly successful drive to strongly improve, or maintain, the highest levels of achievement and personal development for all pupils over a sustained period of time.**

**All leaders and managers are highly ambitious for the pupils and lead by example. They base their actions on a deep and accurate understanding of the school's performance and of staff and pupils' skills and attributes.**

It is very possible to grow into the role and improve subject knowledge over time. Of course it is highly desirable for the post holder to either have an art specialism or at least have “A” Level art but this is not essential in order to be a very effective subject leader. Having highly developed leadership skills are just as important as having subject knowledge. The two go hand in hand, and for the most effective subject leaders being highly ambitious for the pupils is vital to the role. We want children to fly and this comes from having high expectations that they can achieve what many teachers may feel is beyond them. As the art subject leader you are the champion for this subject. A subject often undervalued and given less time than is desired in our tightly squeezed curriculum framework. You may be the only person fighting for art in your school. There may be many teachers who do not value art very highly and therefore the burden of responsibility upon you as subject leader is a heavy one.

Your practical skills, your knowledge of techniques, materials, the visual elements, of the history of art can all be developed over time. Networking, having a mentor, attending courses, undertaking research, practising skills and techniques, will all help you develop rapidly as a leader of art who has a growing subject knowledge.

### **What should you be monitoring and why as subject leader for art?**

The scope of monitoring would include:

- Monitoring the attainment of pupils in art, looking at this over time, comparing classes, year groups, Key Stages and having knowledge of different groups of pupils.
- Monitoring of planning, checking for coverage etc.
- Monitoring the standard and type of work children are producing in art lessons and in sketch books.
- Monitoring pupils learning through talking to pupils about their work and their experiences in art.
- Monitoring the teaching of art through observing, discussing and questioning teachers and providing feedback and reporting to your Head teacher.
- Monitoring the feedback pupils are receiving and how this contributes to their progress, and assessment/ moderation in art.

It is possible to gain a very good insight into the quality of teaching through looking at the outcomes of pupils’ work, judging the progress they are making and through discussing their work and experiences with groups of pupils.

Remember we are aiming for pupils to be learning and making progress. Refer back to the OFSTED Framework to help keep your mind focussed on the core functions of education – I would say progress and aiming for excellence.

In your subject leaders file you should have a section on monitoring and your evaluations that flow from this so you can report accurately to senior leaders, governors and inspectors.

I think it would be useful to summarise how the outcomes of monitoring can be useful to you in leading art.

Monitoring will give you valuable information so that you know about the following and you can plan for improvement:

- Knowing about the standards of work and the progress children are making in art throughout the school including early years.
- Knowing if the National Curriculum is being implemented and the programmes of study covered
- Knowing if the art policy or other related policies are being implemented
- Knowing if there is balance and breadth to the art curriculum
- Knowing if there is consistency of practice across classes and Key Stages
- Knowing if resources are deployed effectively and whether they are adequate to produce good pupil progress
- Knowing if the school staff need CPD in art

The table below is a useful guide, providing an overview of monitoring for art subject leaders.

|   | Monitoring Pupils Art Work  | Monitoring Planning   | Monitoring Teaching  | Monitoring Assessment  |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Why?</b>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To understand the quality of pupils work.</li> <li>- To establish if there is continuity and progression across the school.</li> <li>- To ensure age appropriate expectations or better are being reached.</li> <li>- To gain an understanding of whether pupils are being supported appropriately.</li> </ul>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To ensure coverage of the National Curriculum and school's scheme of work in art.</li> <li>- To ensure teachers are preparing adequately for art lessons.</li> <li>- To ensure the teaching sequence is appropriate to ensure good pupil progress and that assessment is being implemented.</li> <li>- To ensure any differentiation or pupil support is being planned for where required in art.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To give a first-hand observation of the quality of teaching and pupils learning/ progress within lessons.</li> <li>- To ensure equality of provision across classes within year groups.</li> <li>- To ensure expectations are high enough.</li> <li>- To ensure teachers are checking pupils understanding appropriately and are providing good quality feedback to pupils about their work.</li> <li>- To obtain an understanding of teacher's subject knowledge.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To ensure standards are high enough and pupils are making age appropriate progress or better.</li> <li>- To ensure teachers are checking pupils understanding appropriately and are providing good quality feedback to pupils about their work so it helps them make future progress.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>How?</b>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Look at displays, in corridors and classrooms.</li> <li>- Ask to see examples of higher, middle and lower attainers.</li> <li>- Look at sketch books.</li> <li>- Discuss work with individual pupils.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attend planning meeting/ Year Group meetings.</li> <li>- Collect samples of planning.</li> <li>- From lesson observation or through looking at work you can assess if lesson planning is adequate.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lesson observation</li> <li>- Discussions with pupils</li> <li>- Monitoring work samples within the lesson.</li> <li>- monitoring completed work samples.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This area should be in line with the schools assessment policy.</li> <li>- Look at any records.</li> <li>- In lesson observations note AFL being implemented.</li> <li>- Discuss assessment with teachers.</li> <li>- Discuss how children feel they are progressing.</li> <li>- Look at teacher's comments in sketch books or other written feedback.</li> <li>- Look at the quality of comments in report writing for art.</li> </ul> |
| <b>What are you trying to find out?</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does the work reflect good teaching and high expectations?</li> <li>- Have pupils made progress and achieved expectations?</li> <li>- Through discussion find out if pupils were engaged and what they felt they learnt?</li> <li>- Did pupils receive useful feedback?</li> <li>- Are sketch books being used appropriately?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do plans cover the school scheme of work adequately?</li> <li>- Are learning objectives and teaching sequences appropriate?</li> <li>- Is assessment being built into teaching?</li> <li>- Is there consideration of differentiation/ support for pupils?</li> <li>- Are the OFSTED criteria being covered to achieve what the school is aiming for?</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does teaching show effective planning?</li> <li>- Are expectations high enough?</li> <li>- Does the teacher have good command of subject matter?</li> <li>- Are support staff being used effectively to support learning?</li> <li>- Are all pupils learning and making appropriate progress?</li> <li>- Is appropriate feedback being provided to pupils?</li> <li>- The contribution art is making to pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are teachers reflecting on children's learning?</li> <li>- Do they know if pupils are making progress and why and how?</li> <li>- Are they being supportive in giving pupils feedback?</li> <li>- Are they following school policy e.g. for AFL?</li> <li>- Are reports accurate and useful?</li> <li>- Is there moderation between classes/ year groups?</li> </ul>  |

### What should you do with the information you are gathering?

Make sure you record information in line with the school's monitoring policy – this will usually be a proforma or if necessary devise one yourself to help you focus on the monitoring task in hand and to record the relevant information so you can evaluate it and make a judgement. Record evidence that will support any judgements you make. For example if you feel a particular child is not being appropriately supported or a more able child is not being stretched write down the evidence to support this. Keep photographic evidence of pupils work/ displays. These can be annotated and are useful for feeding back to staff.

Share your monitoring with a senior teacher or Head teacher to discuss and agree your judgements and your next steps e.g. feedback to staff, development planning, supporting year groups, providing INSET etc.

Provide written feedback if possible. Ensure you always follow any observation protocols and the monitoring policy of your particular school.

For monitoring pupils' work it is a good idea to devise a proforma to help you. This would contain prompts or key questions. Make sure you look at high, middle and lower attainers. You should also be aware of any children who are on your G&T register and pay attention to these during your monitoring.

If you have identified any key issues from monitoring then make sure they become the focus for your next round of monitoring to ensure they have been addressed.

Your judgements will be based on key questions. Here are some examples:

- Have pupils made progress? How do you know, what are the clues in the work that give you this information?
- Have the learning objectives been met?
- Has the work developed the appropriate visual and tactile elements?
- Has the work developed use of materials and techniques?
- Has the work contributed to pupil's knowledge and understanding of the history of art, craft and design?
- Is the work of a high enough standard? How do you know – look for clues? (keep samples of work to compare year to year)
- Have different groups made enough progress?
- Have G&T children been stretched?
- Is there equality across classes?
- How are sketch books being used?
- Are there any issues emerging, need for training, support with planning etc?
- Are there any quick fixes needed or are there longer term training and development needs?
- Have issues from previous monitoring been addressed?

### **How frequently should you be monitoring?**

You should aim to carry out some monitoring every half term. This does not mean you have to do everything every half term. Plan out your monitoring in a systematic way. Monitoring pupils' work and displays can be fairly straight forward. If you have a concern about standards or coverage from monitoring pupils' work then monitor other areas sooner rather than later. Discuss issues with senior staff and agree your monitoring programme. I would hope you could monitor some teaching every term. Perhaps a learning walk between two or three classes undertaking art at the same time. Consideration needs to be given to the size of the school and how resources are used. However in schools with more than one class per year group it is a good idea to monitor all the classes in the year group.

### **References**

- OFSTED School Inspection Handbook, September 2014, No 120101
- Subject Co-ordinator's Toolkit Cumbria Advisory Teachers and Advanced Skills Teachers Cumbria County Council, No publication date