

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs L Dupen
Headteacher
The Ashley School
Ashley Downs
Lowestoft
Suffolk
NR32 4EU

Dear Mrs Dupen

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 and 2 December 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 schools 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 outstanding.

Achievement in art, craft and design

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

- From low starting points, pupils progress well in developing their subject skills and knowledge. By Year 6 their understanding of Van Gogh's use of colour is evident in their colour mixing and matching. By Year 9, although drawing control remains a challenge, pupils use mixed media creatively to achieve bold and colourful compositions, for example as inspired by buildings. Boys and girls who choose to take a qualification in the subject make excellent progress, often achieving higher levels than in their other subjects. They make individual responses to a shared stimulus, for example the work of Gustav Klimt, following investigative work in their sketchbooks. Pupils' later work in interpreting a chosen artist shows further confidence to diversify, for example their 'Walk Tall' shoe project.

- Pupils enjoy their work in the subject, particularly opportunities to try new techniques or explore unfamiliar materials. However, their work could sometimes be even better by revisiting and refining existing skills. Where students have used their experience to respond to a practising artist, the outcomes are impressive. For example their 'drawings in wire' with local metal sculptor Virginia Storey build on their earlier use of line. By Year 6 pupils show a good response to specific foci, for example their exploration of 'contrast' in response to animal skins. Some pupils use drawing to freely communicate feelings that are difficult to express otherwise, but this is not often developed by the older pupils as a starting point for their work. The pupils are very proud of the many displays of their work, which are respected.

Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

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

- The use of inspiring images and artefacts promotes pupils' curiosity and sustains their interest. For example, by introducing the stimulus of 'Japan' the teacher enabled pupils to wear kimonos and compare the patterns in prints of other people wearing kimonos, before starting their drawings. In discussion, the pupils confirmed that minimum teacher talk and early activity motivates them. Aware of this, the teacher used examples of life-sized paper kimonos decorated with block prints made by past pupils to make the objectives of the project, related to 'pattern', visibly clear. Support staff check and reinforce the understanding of individual pupils sensitively, encouraging pupils to take increasing ownership of their work.
- The good teaching makes potentially difficult concepts accessible to the pupils. For example, when introducing the theme of 'mother and child', role play with a doll in different poses enabled pupils to distinguish between two- and three-dimensional interpretations of the theme represented in paintings and sculptures. The link between their own work and that of other artists is strong thematically, but connections could sometimes be widened and strengthened, for example by using the media and methods used by the artists studied. Different connections are very clear to pupils when practising artists work with them. The exemplary records of pupils' individual achievements could sometimes be used more, particularly in earlier years, to pitch challenges by varying the activities available.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- Pupils enjoy a good range of opportunities to use two- and three-dimensional and digital media with their specialist art teacher or practising artists through community projects, for example designing a mosaic for the local sports centre. The strong multicultural strand to the subject curriculum adds to pupils' understanding of the subject in the context of

wider communities. Through different topics pupils revisit concepts, particularly colour, shape and pattern which develop as confident elements of their later work. Work that expresses feelings or insights into issues of personal fascination or concern is less common. However, pupils are given opportunities to use drawing as a communication tool.

- Opportunities to gain accreditation in the subject include the Arts Award, Entry Level Certificate and more recently a full GCSE. Pupils' perception about what might be possible is developed through visits to exhibitions of work at the local college, nearby schools and art galleries. For example, projects with the Sainsbury Gallery in Norwich contribute to pupils' experience of different kinds of art, craft and design.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of art, craft and design

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

- The impact of subject leadership across the school is clearly evident and highly valued by senior staff. In discussion, a pupil also said that the many art displays show immediately that pupils achieve a lot at the school. The subject leader is starting to widen the impact of pupils' learning and communication through art by strengthening links with other subjects and the community. A 'draw and talk' programme is well established and its success is evident in discussions conducted with pupils who understood that drawing has a wide range of purposes.
- Continuous self-evaluation, supported by judicious use of professional development, ensures that subject teaching and the curriculum are well informed and regularly refreshed. Partnerships with other schools, galleries and artists, often supported through inspirational subject leadership by the local authority, address any potential professional isolation associated with single-subject teaching in an unusual educational setting. For example, the quality of analysis of pupils' learning, developed through a Masters level course, has a lasting impact on the evaluation of, and refinements made to the provision. Involvement in the 'Artsmark' and 'Arts Award' initiatives is used well to moderate judgements, albeit modestly.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- Enabling the more able artists to achieve success in even more challenging examinations by:
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to pursue their feelings- and issues-based work to complement their very successful work in response to given stimuli
 - using sketchbooks across the curriculum to support the development of pupils' drawing, particularly as a form of learning and continuous communication
 - narrowing the focus in some lessons to promote pupils' exploration, improvisation and clarity of connections

concerning the work of different artists, craftworkers and designers.

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

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector