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Mr C Goodwin  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Goodwin

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 22 and 23 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 schools will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of seven lessons, including two which were jointly observed.

The overall effectiveness of art, craft and design is satisfactory with features that are good and outstanding.

#### **Achievement in art, craft and design**

Students' achievement in art, craft and design is satisfactory with good features.

- Students make satisfactory progress overall, from widely variable starting points. A typical proportion of boys opt to take an examination in the subject. In 2010, GCSE results in the subject improved and were broadly average. A good proportion of students achieve the higher A-level grades.
- The quality of students' experimentation is a strength in all years. They explore two, three-dimensional and digital media with confidence and creativity, achieving visual impact through expressive work on a large scale. Students exploit the surface qualities of media very effectively.

- Students develop an appropriate range of knowledge about different artists, craftworkers and designers. However, their understanding about the purpose and meaning of work by creative practitioners is insufficiently explicit, particularly the connections made with their own work at GCSE.
- Observation skills develop well, evident in the quality of students' photography. The quality of recording through drawing is more variable, a skill that students often remain unconvinced about their capacity to improve. Their best work involves direct experience, for example real fish.
- Students enjoy the subject, particularly valuing opportunities to express their imagination and learn about different processes. They appreciate the support and guidance provided by their teachers and the technician. Boys that have visited art galleries with their families realise the significance.
- The passive response of students during the visit contrasts with strident views expressed through the Year 10 responses to Anish Kapoor's Olympic sculpture, Year 9 work with a filmmaker and the boldness of a Year 12 boy who responded to the examination title 'Trees' by using one as a massive brush!

### **Quality of teaching of art, craft and design**

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

- Staff plan lessons that have a clear shape, often including demonstration, making and reviewing. Time is managed well; transition between activities is swift and seamless. In the lessons observed, individual dialogue between staff and students was more successfully led than whole-group discussion.
- The involvement of students in teaching is a strength that has further potential, particularly involving the impressive sixth-form artists as ambassadors for the subject. A Year 7 student observed demonstrated confidently to his peers following perceptive intervention from the teacher.
- The use of assessment is inconsistent but includes good examples of student self-evaluation, review by parents and carers, and teachers' marking. However, students are not always clear about their current standard of work, particularly in relation to specific objectives to target.
- Teaching and support staff work flexibly to ensure that all students, including the boys with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are given equal opportunities to succeed. Staff improvise effectively when students' unexpected responses provide opportunities for learning.
- Students' work is given value through display in the art studios and public areas of the school. In one lesson, images of students' work, photographed and incorporated into a computer presentation, enabled students to compare and contrast their work with other artists, a technique to exploit.
- Portfolios and sketchbooks indicate that the impact of teaching on students' achievement has been mixed, but is currently wholly positive. Sixth-form students benefit from the contrasting views and approaches

used by different staff, including the partner school that jointly delivers the course.

### **Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design**

The quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design is satisfactory with features of outstanding provision emerging.

- Recent curriculum developments have broadened students' experience of art, craft and design, building on a tradition of painting that remains a good foundation. The interaction between media, for example photography, printmaking and painting, is an outstanding feature.
- While not developed as systematically yet as two-dimensional work, three-dimensional experiences that, like their large-scale painting, are physically challenging, are proving successful across different abilities. For example, life-sized 'sticky-tape sculptures' inspired by Anthony Gormley in Year 9.
- A small proportion of students have direct experience of the work of other artists, craftworkers and designers. For example, as part of the whole-school focus on China, a Chinese watercolourist's workshop has proven popular. However, the promotion of art gallery visits is underdeveloped.
- The success of a mural commission for Beverley with other schools, and sale of framed Year 9 prints at the school's 'Eco fair' indicate that students respond well to a 'live' brief, an important development given the recent option for students to take a GCSE focused on 'commercial art'.
- Cross-curricular links are developing, for example Year 8 weaving, linked to their history focus on the industrial revolution. The development of a local, global and personal emphasis in Years 7 to 9 promotes further links. However, literacy is a weaker aspect of students' work in the subject.
- Drawing is a key skill that is starting to improve, for example by building confidence through 'drawing with wire'. However, the weaknesses exposed early through Year 7 baseline assessments are not continuously revisited. Sixth-form students are encouraged to explore 'life drawing' at Hull College.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management of art, craft and design**

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

- Since taking responsibility, the subject leader's strategies to halt the decline in students' achievement while ensuring their enjoyment, have proven effective. However, the department is aware that further improvement is required to match students' wider achievement.
- A commendable feature is the carefully considered strategy to establish and sustain improvement by enhancing provision throughout rather than by providing a 'quick fix' in Year 11. The widening of provision to embrace art, craft and design is well informed by research into boys' achievement.

- The distance of the specialist building from the main school is challenging in relation to communication and travelling time. However, the computer suite, studios, sixth-form room, and exhibition area amount to an excellent resource. Appropriate plans exist to develop the community dimension.
- Links with a nearby school and college are established. However, the use of national initiatives is underdeveloped. For example, the work of the 'Campaign for Drawing', Arts Council 'Arts Award' and 'Engage' association of gallery educators all have a relevance for the issues being tackled.
- The involvement of parents, through regular feedback about students' participation and progress, is supporting the process of subject self-evaluation. Structured discussion with students during the visit also revealed their interest in playing a leading role in future development.
- Senior staff are supportive and sensitive to the distinctiveness of the subject. For example, the recent appointment of an additional specialist, and support given to the subject leader to explore the interface between creativity as an artist and teacher, reflect the 'artist teacher' initiative.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- raising students' attainment in the subject by:
  - making connections more explicit between students' own work and that of other artists, craftworkers and designers
  - integrating a coherent approach to assessment that enables students to build on success and target weaker areas
  - developing students' confidence in drawing by broadening their understanding about different purposes and approaches
  - increasing the use of direct experience, promoting opportunities to work in art galleries, with creative practitioners and industries
- promoting the distinctive contribution of the subject by embracing opportunities to work with the school, local and wider arts and educational communities.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop art, craft and design education at 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Ian Middleton**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**