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15 March 2012

Ms L Quinn  
Principal  
Stourport High School and Sixth Form  
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Dear Ms Quinn

### **Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: art, craft and design**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 13 and 14 March 2012 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 institutions 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 one joint observation with a member of the senior leadership team.

The overall effectiveness of art, craft and design is good.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design is good.

- Students make good progress from very low starting points during their first two years at the school. Progress accelerates in Year 9 where students can opt to follow a BTEC course. The proportion of A\* and A grades at GCSE is significantly lower than the national average. However by the end of Year 13 attainment is outstanding with a the proportion of students achieving the higher grades at A2 and BTEC level 3 being significantly above the national average.
- Students enjoy art and develop positive attitudes to learning in the subject. They build skills across a range of two and three dimensional media and develop a breadth of subject knowledge. In Years 10 and 11 there is increasing evidence of independence and creativity within their

work, although there is less emphasis on extending drawing skills and this can constrain the depth and quality of work associated with higher levels. Sketchbooks are used well to record, research and develop ideas from the start.

- In Years 7 and 8 critical and evaluative skills develop more slowly than practical skills, although students feel inspired by looking at work by other artists, for example Year 7 particularly enjoy creating work in response to Tanjore paintings from South India. However, by Year 9 students are able to critically analyse the work of other artists and make reflective and evaluative annotation of their own.
- In the sixth form students build on prior experiences and make personal responses that are well informed by engaging first-hand with the work of a wide range of artists, craftspeople and designers, although drawing remains a discipline that would benefit from further development. A high proportion of the students successfully progress onto art-related courses and careers.

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

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

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and experience which they use to plan interesting and engaging projects across the wide range of courses. Lessons are planned to support students of varied ability and the school Virtual Learning Environment is used effectively to develop independent learning. Students following BTEC courses are expected to set individual targets for themselves at the start of lessons and regularly review their progress against these.
- Short starter activities visually engage students, recap prior learning or test understanding, setting the tone for the lesson. High quality visual resources, good use of ICT and demonstrations help students to know what to do. Students behave well and make good use of lesson time. They value opportunities for more extended work, for example, through the school's Super Learning Days, which enable them to develop concentrated ways of working and accelerate progress.
- Teachers know students well and relationships are very professional. Regular assessment provides helpful comments to enable students to improve their work and detailed tracking is in place to monitor students' progress. Students know their target grades and are clear about current levels of progress and how to achieve their targets; they feel well supported by their teachers and value one to one 'learning conversations' in lessons. Lessons provide sufficient opportunities for students to peer and self assess.

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

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

- The curriculum develops students' skills, knowledge and understanding well in relation to a broad range of art and craft processes, including painting, printmaking, graphics, textiles, three dimensional mixed media and ceramics. Opportunities to engage with digital media are developing.
- The curriculum is fully inclusive and students can opt for BTEC and GCSE courses to meet their ability and interests. In Year 9 the 'Access' group follow a BTEC level 1 course and this helps the least able students to build confidence and skills and effectively re-engage with the mainstream curriculum whilst gaining nationally recognised accreditation. Students in the sixth form are offered great flexibility in the units that they can combine for the BTEC level 3 course or the endorsement of the AS and A2 course.
- First hand experiences of art, craft and design are good for students in Years 10 to 13, with trips to local and national galleries and opportunities to work with artists. For younger students there is too little direct contact with artwork or artists at work to inform their learning and broaden their experience. One Year 7 student suggested that sixth form students could be 'artists' for them to learn from by seeing how they work.
- 'Live' briefs offer the opportunity for the locality to be used as stimulus. For example, Year 13 students produce site-specific sculpture for the school grounds and locations within the town for the Public Art unit of their course. Work related learning experiences are creatively introduced to the Year 9 Access group through a simulated factory setting with students producing hand decorated plates inspired by the work of Clarice Cliff.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design is good.

- Supported by senior staff who value the subject, department leadership has had a positive impact on student progress through thorough baseline assessment and a flexible approach to curriculum planning that addresses the need to develop subject skills. The improved levels of achievement seen in Year 9 portfolios show that initiatives are working.
- Teachers are deployed effectively and opportunities to team teach are used to maximise the impact of their specialist skills for students. The department use connections with local and national arts and education networks and professional development opportunities to refresh and share specialist subject skills and knowledge. This subsequently informs curriculum planning.
- Subject monitoring is rigorous and self evaluation accurate. It exploits a good range of lesson observation, learning walks and analysis of assessment and tracking of data to inform development plans. Priorities for further improvement are clearly identified.
- The subject contributes well to cross curricular projects, particularly in humanities, drama and design technology. Student work is mainly exhibited in the art department and more could be done to make it visible

across the school, showing what is achievable. The VLE provides an ideal opportunity for developing an online gallery that parents and the wider community can access.

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

- increasing the proportion of higher grades achieved at GCSE and strengthening work in the sixth form by:
  - providing opportunities for students to develop drawing skills through working from direct observation
- increasing opportunities for students in Year 7 and 8 to engage first hand with the work of artists by:
  - enabling all students to visit an art gallery
  - using p16 students as artist role models.

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

As 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.

Yours sincerely

**Elizabeth Macfarlane**  
**Additional Inspector**