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Mr D Smart
Principal
Chatham and Clarendon Federation
Chatham Street
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Dear Mr Smart

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 14 and 15 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 eight lessons.

Context of the school

Before the establishment of the Chatham and Clarendon Federation in 2009, boys and girls were taught in two separate single-sex grammar schools. The federation now operates as a single school on two sites, with single-sex classes in Key Stage 3 and mixed classes for older students. At the time of the visit Year 11 students were taught in single-sex classes as part of the school's transitional arrangements.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

Achievement in art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- Students enjoy art lessons, valuing opportunities to make personal choices in their work and use of media. Girls' attainment at GCSE has been consistently high, and the proportion achieving A* and A grades is well

above average. Boys' attainment was around the national average in 2010, but dropped markedly in 2011. The proportion of boys achieving A* and A grades is low. There are no gaps between boys' and girls' achievement at A level, where pass rates have been consistently high. However, although a significant number of students progress to foundation courses the proportion achieving A and B grades has declined to well below the national average.

- Students work confidently with a wide range of media and techniques. They enjoy opportunities to explore different ideas and experiment with new approaches. In the strongest work, students demonstrate good observational drawing skills, and their sketchbooks and annotation clearly demonstrate how they have developed ideas from a starting point and responded to a variety of visual sources and research into other artists' work. However, these qualities are not consistent strengths of students' work. In some cases, work is incomplete, and insufficient attention is given to the quality of finish of practical work or evaluative annotation to record their thinking and development of ideas.

Quality of teaching in art, craft and design

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

- Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject and students value their different areas of specialist expertise. Students, with very few exceptions, respond positively to teachers' guidance and concentrate well in lessons; relationships between teachers and students are good.
- Staff have worked hard to adapt to significant changes in the school in recent years and are willing to try out new approaches. However, the extent and pace of students' progress varies between lessons. In one lesson, students made excellent progress in making their first piece of felted fabric and demonstrated a very good understanding of this new technique. In other lessons, not all students make as much progress as they could because tasks are insufficiently challenging. Although teachers know students well, and are aware of students' varied interests and abilities, lesson planning and schemes of work rarely indicate how tasks and activities might be varied to meet different individual needs.
- Lesson objectives are routinely shared with students, but these are not always sufficiently precise to enable teachers to assess how well students have achieved them.
- Teachers encourage students to evaluate their own work and build in opportunities for peer review and group discussion. While they often ask pertinent questions to elicit students' responses, they do not always question in sufficient depth to extend or deepen students' understanding. On occasions, students' review of work is confined to reflecting on the success of the technique rather than evaluating the aesthetic qualities in the work. Teachers mark work regularly and students know both their target and current grades. They find teachers' verbal and written feedback helpful in identifying how they can improve their work. However, teachers

do not systematically follow up whether students have acted on improvement points or completed work to the required standard.

- Teachers provide good support and guidance for students when choosing subject options in Years 9 and 11, and for sixth form students progressing to higher level study in art and design. However, students' understanding of opportunities and types of employment in the creative industries is developed less effectively.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- Teachers introduce students to a good range of different types of art, design and craft work, including many less well known practitioners. For example, students in Year 9 combined work in ceramics and textiles with reference to Judy Chicago's Dinner Party.
- Drawing is an integral part of each project, with opportunities to revisit drawing techniques and develop skills as students progress through the school.
- Students benefit from regular opportunities to visit galleries and work with creative practitioners. Students in Key Stage 3 have worked with artists and illustrators on focus day activities, leading to large-scale paintings and mosaic works. Students in Key Stages 4 and 5 make regular visits to galleries in London to research artists relevant to their individual projects. The school has established very productive links with the Turner Contemporary Gallery in Margate, through gallery visits, competitions and the Youth Navigator scheme, where a group of Year 9 students has been trained to talk to visitors in the gallery. Students appreciate how this has increased their knowledge of the subject and their confidence.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

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

- The school's evaluation of the quality of provision in the subject accurately identifies key strengths and areas for improvement, particularly the underachievement of boys, and the need to increase the higher grades achieved by A-level students. Managers have taken prompt action to stem the decline in boys' attainment, with significant re-organisation of staffing and the curriculum. The school's current monitoring of progress gives early indications that the gap between boys' and girls' attainment at GCSE is closing, but it is too early to determine the full impact of the actions taken.
- Displays of students' work around the school and in the sixth form common room contribute well to raising the profile of the subject within the federation. End of year exhibitions enable students to display work to the school and wider community.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving boys' attainment to match the high levels achieved by girls, and increasing the proportion of A-level students achieving higher grades by ensuring that students:
 - complete all set work
 - act on the feedback provided by their teachers
 - strive for higher levels of finish
 - make more explicit connections between different lines of enquiry in their sketchbooks, using annotation and evaluation
- ensuring that inconsistencies in the quality of teaching are addressed by using knowledge of students' different interests and abilities to plan activities that help all make the best possible progress
- increasing students' knowledge of the wide range of employment opportunities in the creative and cultural industries.

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

Janet Mercer
Her Majesty's Inspector