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Mr P Gamble  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Gamble

### **Ofsted 2011–12 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 28 and 29 February 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 students' work; and observation of six lessons.

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 a variety of media. Many students start with low attainment in the subject. Most make at least the expected progress by the end of Year 9, although fewer boys than girls achieve the higher levels. School assessment data for the current year shows that a higher proportion of boys and girls are on track to achieve the higher levels.
- While the proportion achieving A\* to C grades at GCSE remains a little below average, pass rates are high on all vocational courses. The proportion achieving higher grades in BTEC fashion is very high, but well below national average on BTEC art and design courses. The small number of students taking AS and A-level art achieve well.

- While some students' sketchbooks contain good examples of observational drawing, and occasional examples of more experimental approaches to drawing, these skills are underdeveloped. Students regularly use drawing as a starting point for a project, but not enough as a means of developing and exploring ideas and imagery. They do not always make sufficiently clear connections between different ideas and research.
- Students gain confidence in working with a range of two- and three-dimensional media. Several projects in Key Stage 3 show strong use of colour, composition, pattern and texture. In Key Stage 4, students' use of three-dimensional concepts is evident in their successful sculptures based on enlargements of everyday objects.
- While teachers encourage students to reflect on and evaluate their work, the extent and quality of annotation and critical response are variable. Students study and analyse other artists' work, but do not always successfully apply what they have learnt in their own practice, or achieve the control and quality of finish to achieve higher grades.

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

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

- Relationships between teachers and students are good and students value the personalised support they receive from teachers and support staff.
- Teachers plan varied and interesting projects, explain tasks well and provide good practical demonstrations and examples of work, which helps students know what they need to do. The particularly detailed planning, and very high teacher expectations in fashion, enables students to make very good progress and develop good garment design and construction skills, resulting in high levels of achievement.
- 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 and assistants develop strategies to improve students' language and literacy skills and reinforce keywords and specialist terminology in lessons.

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

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

- The curriculum provides opportunities for students to use a range of two- and three-dimensional media, through design briefs as well as fine art approaches. Students have few opportunities to use digital media.
- Drawing is included in each project. However, curriculum planning does not explicitly identify how students will develop and build on these skills each year. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing observational drawing skills but fewer opportunities to explore more imaginative or expressive responses.

- Students taking options in the subject benefit from regular gallery visits, studying at first-hand work relevant to their own projects, although few such opportunities exist in Key Stage 3. However, Year 7 students thoroughly enjoyed a demonstration of drawing and illustration by Quentin Blake and explored similar approaches in their own illustrations of a Roald Dahl text, and in developing poster designs for an anti-bullying campaign.
- Students have enjoyed some community-based projects and the school successfully secured funding from Transport for London to design and create a mural in the local area.

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

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

- Since her appointment, the subject leader has instigated rigorous systems for quality assurance across the department, including internal moderation of Key Stage 3 assessments, leading to more accurate grading of achievement.
- Staff have responded positively to the whole-school focus on improving target setting, careful monitoring of students' progress and early intervention for those at risk of underachieving, with early signs that this is helping more students to achieve higher levels or grades.
- Subject level self-assessment identifies most key areas for improvement, but does not focus on raising higher grade attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4 sufficiently clearly. Staff development has focused on awarding body requirements, but with few opportunities for subject-specific development or training. The subject leader is keen to develop stronger links with local schools to help share good practice more widely.

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

- raising attainment, particularly the higher National Curriculum levels and higher grades in GCSE and BTEC art and design courses by:
  - insisting that students complete all set work and ensuring that they improve the quality of work by acting on feedback from teachers
  - introducing a wider range of approaches to drawing and planning more explicitly for progression in skills and development of ideas
  - ensuring that students make stronger connections between different lines of enquiry in their sketchbooks and apply what they have learnt from the study of other artists to their own practice
  - helping students develop more confident control of media and achieve higher levels of finish, where appropriate
- enabling students in Key Stage 3 to learn from creative practitioners' work first hand, and to draw more resources outside the classroom

- increasing opportunities for students to use digital media creatively
- enabling the subject leader and teachers to benefit from subject-specific staff development and to share good practice with other schools.

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**