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Mr J Keulemans  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Keulemans

### **Ofsted 2012–13 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 15 and 16 May 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 11 lessons, including two which were jointly observed.

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 below average starting points to attain standards that are above average in BTEC and GCSE qualifications. A good proportion progress on to art-related courses post-16 at local colleges.
- The subject is popular with different groups, including academically able students and those who find learning difficult. Boys do particularly well in relation to their other subjects and their peers nationally.
- Students are able to explore ideas and media imaginatively, particularly digital media. Their ability to record observations, develop ideas and refine work through drawing and the use of sketchbooks is less well developed.
- Large-scale work on display showed that students are able to work collaboratively to good effect. Year 10 students were observed working

intensively and expressively, using three-dimensional media imaginatively in response to the stimulus 'fears and phobias'.

- The students interviewed expressed a good level of understanding about the different purposes of the subject, including vocational and cultural. Earlier opportunities to make choices and experience stimuli at first hand resulted in perceptive observations. Students' independence and creative diversity emerge more rapidly and confidently in Years 10 and 11.

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

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

- Relationships between staff and students are good. Teachers and teaching assistants provide helpful guidance through constructive marking and individual support. Written guidance, for example about how to annotate their work, helps students develop and apply their literacy skills well.
- The whole-school strategy to reinforce students' literacy and numeracy skills at the start of lessons is not always adapted well to the subject. However, students' school-wide routine of writing and reviewing their personal lesson targets contributes to purposeful learning in the subject.
- All staff use computer resources effectively to stimulate students' interest. Images and text are juxtaposed attractively, modelling the expectations made of students with regard to the presentation of their work. The range of graphic techniques adopted by students is not always equally wide.
- Examples and the work of other students help make expectations clear. However, students have few opportunities to demonstrate skills to others. Progression 'ladders' although not used across all disciplines, give students very helpful stepping stones towards reaching higher standards.
- In the most effective lessons, activities are skilfully designed to enable students to meet a clearly defined learning objective. Questioning by the teacher and self-evaluation by the students benefit from the sharp focus.

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

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

- The curriculum between Years 7 and 9 establishes an adequate foundation of subject knowledge and skills. However, cross-curricular links particularly between visual and performing art forms are not always exploited to ensure that students develop and apply their skills continuously.
- The curriculum meets the needs and interests of most groups of students. Graphics and photography GCSE options and three-dimensional BTEC projects motivate boys particularly well. The introduction of more fine art is a well judged strategy to widen the participation of girls.
- Topics linked to students' direct experiences help students understand the relevance of the subject. For example, in a lesson that explored the impact of colour on branding, students explored graphic design related to the school, advertising and the promotion of Manchester.

- Projects with local art galleries and creative practitioners are well focused on broadening students' knowledge and understanding of art, craft and design. College students have also visited to share their work. Although the subject curriculum early on is less enriched by first-hand experiences, students value their work in English inspired by a visit to an art gallery.

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

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

- Joint lesson observations with senior staff indicate that the monitoring and evaluation of teaching in the subject are rigorous. Records of observations reflect a culture of constructively critical feedback. Focused learning walks add to the range of information about the quality and impact of provision.
- The subject benefits from the sharing of good practice across the school. For example, subject staff have shared their approaches to creative teaching and have learnt from techniques used in other subjects to which students have responded particularly well.
- Rising standards in the subject are attributable to effective work across the visual and performing arts faculty. The range of evidence used to evaluate provision includes internal and external sources, for example use of the Artsmark scheme. However, improvements and success criteria specific to the subject are not always clearly distinguishable.

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

- developing students' confidence in using drawing and painting, for example through the use of sketchbooks and experimentation
- ensuring that best practice in teaching is common, for example by sharpening the lesson focus and using subject stimuli early in lessons
- making improvement plans and actions clearer in relation to priorities that are specific to the subject or that are shared across different art forms.

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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

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