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Mrs L Dobson
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Dear Mrs Dobson

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 8 and 9 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 seven 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.

- After a number of years of significantly below average attainment students' current work shows that in Key Stages 3 and 4 students make satisfactory progress. Boys and girls are on target to attain higher GCSE grades than in previous years, albeit still below national standards.
- Students enjoy their work in the subject. As a percentage of the whole cohort, the proportion of students taking the subject at GCSE is above average. In particular, the widening range of media available is attracting more boys to the subject than in previous years.
- Three-dimensional work is an emerging strength, capitalising on students' sensitivity to the physical and creative properties of materials. The clay

masks and textile structures completed by Year 7 students, progress to effective low relief and natural form sculptures in Year 10.

- Two-dimensional skills progress more slowly because students' drawing is well below average on entry, and students are often unclear about how to use other artists' techniques to revisit and refine their own work. However, lino and screen prints created by Year 8 students, and experimental drawing and digital work created by Years 10 and 11, show that when applied to other techniques their graphic skills improve.
- Students contribute to discussion enthusiastically, using technical language appropriately. However, their written work, for example annotation, does not always reflect the depth of their thinking or complement the presentation of their work, skills that staff are helping students to improve.

Quality of teaching in art, craft and design

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

- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and contributes positively to the range of artists, craftmakers and designers referenced in lessons. However, teachers' specialist strengths are not fully exploited to challenge students' creative pursuit of particular media.
- Students' progression in the best lessons is thoughtfully planned. Structured management of the classroom enables students to move independently to the next stage of their work. By contrast, in the weaker lessons the pace is slow and students rarely initiate learning.
- Some lessons make high expectations explicit through selective use of other students' work. However, not all lessons exploit visual stimulus well to attract students' interest. The use of classroom displays to promote, and explain how to achieve high standards is inconsistent.
- A very effective lesson observed started with the teachers' analysis of her own portfolio. The students were inspired by the opportunity to evaluate work first hand and question 'the artist' directly. The impact on the quality of their self- and peer-assessment was profound.

Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

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

- A suitable range of topics is studied that enables students to learn about past and contemporary artists, craftmakers and designers, familiar and distant cultures. The natural environment is given particularly strong emphasis. One student illustrated the value of broadening themes when he described how he had used his local church to inspire his examination work.
- Few students have visited an art gallery. However, a visit to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park is planned. Strong observational work following a visit by students taking GCSE to a sea world aquarium has helped students understand the importance of first-hand experiences.

- The breadth of two- and three-dimensional media used is proving effective in engaging boys and girls. The range of examination options are increasing. However, digital media, including professional standard computer equipment available, is underused as a creative medium.
- Although not a regular feature of provision there are examples of effective work with creative practitioners. For example, the subject makes an early impact on visitors through gates and sculptures in the school grounds designed by the students and constructed by a metal sculptor.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

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

- The subject leader has shown good judgement in arresting the decline in standards by improving provision in Key Stages 3 and 4. The impact on a profile of rising performance contributes to satisfactory capacity for further improvement.
- The subject contributes to the community arts ethos of the school. For example, students are given opportunities to exhibit their work alongside adults. Nevertheless, there are missed opportunities to use the locality as a stimulus or embrace national initiatives, for example the 'Big Draw'.
- The subject leader leads improvements in teaching and learning by example. However, there are not enough opportunities taken to team teach to address swiftly the variable quality of teaching.
- The use of subject self-evaluation to inform improvement priorities is at an early stage of development. For example, success criteria related to raising attainment is not expressed clearly enough to support performance management.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the attainment of boys and girls to national standards by improving their ability to refine skills, informed by techniques used by creative practitioners
- addressing inconsistencies in teaching by increasing team teaching and initiatives that exploit the individual expertise of staff
- enriching the curriculum by increasing first-hand experiences and opportunities to use digital media
- accelerating the impact of subject leadership by using critical evaluation of provision within the school and other schools, through networking.

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