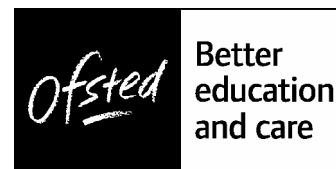


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Mrs Jenny Lawrie  
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Dear Mrs Lawrie

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art, craft and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 and 20 September 2006 to look at work in art, craft and design.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the impact of provision on the breadth and depth of pupils' subject knowledge, understanding and skills and the contribution of the subject to pupils' creative development.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of art, craft and design was judged to be good.

## Achievement and standards

Achievement in the subject is good at both key stages.

- Attainment on entry in the subject is below national averages and standards are close to average by the end of Key Stage 3. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are in line with those seen nationally and have been so for a number of years.
- Pupils' attitudes towards art, craft and design are very positive and they respond enthusiastically in lessons, behaving well and making good use of their time. Many are keen to continue their work outside lesson time.
- The school's specialist status for the arts is making a satisfactory impact on standards and achievement in the subject.

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

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

- Lessons are well planned to meet pupils' needs, offering a good range of opportunities to learn whilst rightly focusing on practical learning.
- Lessons are very well managed to make best use of the time available. They have clear objectives for learning and are well structured. The teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to offer good guidance to pupils, including by providing exemplar approaches.
- The assessment of pupils' work is good. They receive appropriate feedback from teachers as to the progress being made and most understand what their overall targets are. However, pupils show insufficient understanding of how to assess their own progress in the short term.

## Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- It is enriched by the school's specialist status in the arts, for example through contact with artists visiting the school and pupils participating in collaborative projects such as an arts week.
- At Key Stage 3, pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are well developed through engagement with the formal visual elements and an interesting range of themes. This work is appropriately extended at Key Stage 4 where, in the latter stages, the pupils develop a more independent approach.
- Transitional projects into Year 7, and between subsequent years, are a strength because they promote continuity and individuality in learning.
- Although pupils complete a broad range of work at both key stages, they have too few opportunities to work in three dimensions or to explore the work of contemporary artists and designers. By Key Stage

4 this means that they do not routinely explore a rich enough range of processes in order to refine their ideas.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good overall.

- The subject leader manages the majority of the teaching herself but provides good support for those who teach alongside her.
- Subject development planning links well to the school's specialist status and the needs of the pupils.
- There is good evidence of improvement in the effectiveness of the subject over time, for example in the use of assessment data to track pupils' progress.
- Subject evaluation is effective in identifying many areas requiring improvement and some imaginative methods, such as pupil questionnaires, are used to analyse the effectiveness of what is provided. However, the evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work in relation to the different areas of the National Curriculum or the GCSE examination syllabus is not systematic enough to underpin improvement planning.

## Subject issue – the contribution of the subject to pupils' creative development

- The development of creativity within pupils' work is satisfactory and is valued by subject staff.
- Lessons have a good atmosphere for learning and pupils are encouraged to approach their work without fear of failure.
- At Key Stage 3 there are clear structures for most projects and it is within these parameters that pupils are encouraged to explore rather than allowing them to plan highly individual responses to a given theme. Nevertheless, some interesting work results from the transitional projects between years and here there is good scope for pupils to be more inventive.
- At Key Stage 4, the latter stages of the course afford good opportunities for pupils to be individually creative. However, the relative weakness in pupils' assessment of their own work hinders their ability to develop and refine their work.

## Inclusion

All groups of pupils respond equally well to art, craft and design and are supported in making good progress. Teaching and learning is effectively planned to meet the needs of all pupils. Their progress is carefully tracked and effective support is provided for those who fall behind. The school's specialist status has been effective in raising the profile of the subject as an area where all pupils can succeed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to give pupils more opportunities to work in three dimensions and enrich the range of processes they use by learning about the work of contemporary artists and designers
- to develop further the pupils' ability to assess their work in the short term so as to identify ways to move forward
- to enhance subject evaluation through the analysis of relative strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning across the National Curriculum programmes of study and GCSE assessment objectives.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long  
Her Majesty's Inspector