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Mr Stephen Bovey
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Dear Mr Bovey

Ofsted survey inspection programme – art, craft and design

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 30 and 31 January 2007 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. 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in art, craft and design are good.

- From below average starting points, students make good progress in Key Stage 3 so that standards are average by the end of Year 9.
- Students develop good skills in using a range of media and processes.
- In Years 10 and 11, progress continues to be good on both the GCSE and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) First Certificate courses. Standards are above average and each student's work shows a strong sense of personal direction.
- Standards are also above average on the AS and A2 courses offered in Years 12 and 13, as well as on the BTEC National Award in fashion. Students make good progress on the BTEC National Award in photography although standards are average because students have little knowledge of photography before they start.
- Work by students of all ages is characterised by innovative responses to themes and issues. They enjoy the subject, making work which is

meaningful to them. In some cases, the ambitious nature of students' ideas outstrips their capacity to communicate them successfully through manipulation of the visual elements.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in art, craft and design are good with outstanding features.

- Teachers plan learning well, have good subject knowledge, enjoy positive relationships with students and manage lessons effectively.
- Support and guidance for individual students, particularly those on examination courses, is outstanding.
- The tracking of each student's progress is good between lessons, enabling underachievement to be identified and tackled.
- Students are offered good opportunities to assess their own work and many do this successfully. However, some, notably the less able, find difficulty defining what they need to do in order to move forward.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in art, craft and design is good with outstanding features.

- The curriculum is regularly reviewed and offers a stimulating range of themes. Projects progressively develop students as independent learners; they value this freedom and the majority are well supported. Nevertheless, a minority would benefit from more exploration of the formal visual elements so as to facilitate the realisation of their ideas.
- Students encounter a good range of materials and processes. They use information and communications technology (ICT) as a research tool and older students use it with increasing success as an expressive medium. Younger students would benefit from more opportunities to use ICT in this way, for example through digital photography. Developing literacy is well considered.
- The outstanding features of the curriculum are the excellent range of enrichment activities, such as clubs and visits, and the flexibility afforded to students by the BTEC courses between Years 10 and 13.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management in art, craft and design are good.

- The subject leader fosters a strong sense of teamwork and shared vision which has led to the broadening of provision, improvement in the learning environment and rises in standards in recent years.
- The standards reached by students and the quality of provision are monitored well to define the areas for improvement noted in development plans. However, more comprehensive use should be

made of data relating to students' achievement to identify weaker areas of learning and set priorities for the department to work on.

Subject issue – the contribution of the subject to students' creative development

Students' creative development is good.

- Following a structured introduction to materials, processes and skills for younger students, their work becomes increasingly diverse.
- Curriculum planning and classroom teaching encourage students to take risks and experiment by offering them possible ways forward, while encouraging them to take ownership of decisions.
- Creativity is valued within the subject, reflecting a wider school ethos. Subject teachers give considerable thought to assessing the extent of students' creativity, although there is further to go in clarifying for themselves, and for the students, how creativity can be measured.

Inclusion

The inclusion of all students in the subject is good. The performance of students at different levels of attainment is broadly even and there are examples of students with learning difficulties doing exceptionally well. The curriculum is adapted well to meet students' needs and lessons cater for a broad attainment range. Students' progress is tracked well although greater use of data on achievement would strengthen the identification of underperforming groups.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve further the students' use of the formal visual elements to develop and communicate their ideas
- make more use of data concerning students' achievement, including that of different groups, when analyzing strengths and weaknesses in learning and setting priorities for subject development.

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

A copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector

