19 March 2007

Mr H Porter
Headteacher
Joseph Rowntree School
Haxby Road
New Earswick
York
YO32 2BZ

Dear Mr Porter

Ofsted survey inspection programme
Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Art and Design

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my joint visit with Sandra Tweedie, on 13- 14 March look at work in ICT and Art & 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 are published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of ICT, the visit had a particular focus on the assessment of ICT.   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 lessons.
The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be satisfactory. The overall effectiveness of art and design was judged to be good.

ICT

Achievement and standards

Overall, achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Standards at Key Stage 4 have been below average but have improved and in 2006 were within the broadly average range. However, students make less progress in ICT than in other subjects.
- Reported levels of attainment at Key Stage 3 are above average, but these are not reliable. The school does not have records of assessment and moderation;

there are no student records or moderated portfolios; and work available on students' network areas shows too little which is at Level 5. However, the head of department has undertaken a sharper analysis of the current levels at which students are working: this indicates a lower but more accurate figure. Students are now covering a broader range of capability in Key Stage 3 and current levels are broadly average.

- The work of some students is good and some subjects extend students' ability to use ICT to plan, design and analyse data.
- Students make satisfactory use of ICT to extend their personal development. For example, they compare images of their PE performance with the ideal to improve their skills and take pride in presenting their work well. Although students appreciate the need for care when using the internet, the school could improve their understanding of potential dangers.
- Although the number of students has fallen in ICT, strategies to improve retention are effective and year 13 students make satisfactory progress.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge in lessons observed. They planned well and students generally responded positively. Where teaching was good, students clearly enjoyed their learning, developed new skills and were able to integrate work from different applications.
- On occasions students did not have a sufficiently clear understanding of how to improve their work because the teacher had not taken account of gaps in prior learning. Teaching and learning is not helped by the layout of most ICT rooms where students have no opportunity to plan, discuss and reflect away from computer screens.

Quality of curriculum

The ICT curriculum is inadequate.

- The school does not meet statutory requirements for ICT at Key Stage 4. Around a half of the students follow an ICT course, but the school does not ensure that others receive their entitlement to the National Curriculum programme of study.
- Students following an ICT course in Year 11 are not given a suitable timetable to ensure coverage of examination work in Year 10 and this has prevented them from covering as much of the syllabus as had originally been intended.
- The current audit of ICT coverage across the curriculum is in its early stages and while there is use of ICT in other subjects, students' ICT capability is not

generally well developed.   There are many missed opportunities for helping students to be more reflective and effective users of ICT.

- Good use is made of the weekly ICT lesson in Years 7 and 8 to enable pupils to follow the National Curriculum programme of study. However, work in Year 9 is too focussed on the business curriculum and needs to be further adapted and extended to define the rationale and outcomes expected from Year 9 study.
- The school offers options to study ICT at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form which provide an adequate range, although they could be extended.
- The school's network has been expanded to support the ICT curriculum, and the use of ICT across subjects. However, teachers do encounter problems of unreliability of some equipment, and difficulty in booking ICT suites. Teachers in a number of subjects are hindered in their use of ICT because the approach to security, while proper and understandable, is not flexible enough to provide educational solutions.

Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory.

- The school has suffered from considerable upheaval and dislocation in the recent management of ICT. This has meant that progress since the last inspection has been limited.
- However, current management of the subject is improving and is more effective. The departmental self-evaluation is broadly accurate and identifies areas requiring improvement, many of which have been addressed.
- The curriculum at Key Stage 3 has been clarified, extended and improved. An audit of provision is underway in Key Stage 4; the progress of students following examination courses is being monitored closely to ensure that students will complete requirements and gain qualifications. Teachers have been provided with materials to support the use of ICT in other subjects and staff training needs for ICT are being assessed.
- The vision for ICT is extensive and aspirational although it will require strong leadership and support from a senior level.

Assessment of ICT

Current assessment of ICT is satisfactory.

- Previously inflated assessments at Key Stage 3 have lacked rigour and so teachers have not had sufficient information to explain to students what they need to do to improve.
- Current assessment arrangements at Key Stage 3 are clear and helpful both to students and to staff. Materials for students' self-assessment contribute to a

useful dialogue about what students need to do to improve their work and show capability at the next attainment level.

- The accuracy of Key Stage 3 assessment is enhanced by a better understanding of pupils' experience at primary school together with early base-line assessment in Year 7. The departmental head has initiated a process of joint assessment of levels with partner primary schools.
- Assessment of examination work in Key Stages 4 and in the sixth form is now more accurate and focussed on successful completion of examination requirements.

Inclusion

- The school has yet to address issues of inclusion. Not all students will have access to a computer or the internet although that access is implied in the school's plans to extend its Virtual Learning Environment. The school has not clarified its approach to the deployment and training for teaching assistants in ICT lessons.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure as a matter of urgency that the ICT curriculum meets statutory requirements
- support developments of the use of ICT in other subjects by completing the staff training audit and by meeting teachers' needs
- ensure that the technical support is effective and flexible in providing access to resources and systems to support staff and students
- continue to give full support to students in Years 11, 12 and 13 to ensure that they reach their potential and gain their ICT qualifications
- ensure that assessment at Key Stage 3 is accurate, even if that necessitates reporting levels of attainment lower than in previous years
- provide opportunities for students to engage in peer-assessment and develop a reflective approach to their work, so that they exploit the benefits of using ICT applications
- where feasible, improve the working environment in ICT suites and work rooms
- update the school's internet safety policy and ensure it is understood by all students and staff.

Art and Design

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- In Key Stage 3 students develop a good understanding of the visual elements of art and design. Students express their ideas and observations confidently, particularly through their use of colour and graphic media.
- Students are beginning to use design software as a starting point for painting but this is at an early stage of development. In their self portrait and landscape projects students use colour and art media very effectively to create sensitive imagery.
- Students' achievement at GCSE has improved considerably since the previous inspection in 2003. The achievement of higher A*-C grades for GCSE Fine Art is well above the national average. Boys and girls do well; the achievement of girls is particularly high. The new vocational GCSE Art and Design double award course is taken by a wide ability range; progress is good for the majority and students develop well presented preparatory and folder work. Space and balance are used effectively when students work on a confident scale; sculptural insects formed in white card for example were very effective. Girls generally achieved higher A*-C grades in 2006 but boys achieved low grades.
- Achievement and standards at GCE A-level Fine Art and the Applied GCE A- level Art and design are good.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good

- Lessons are generally well organised. Students enjoy their learning in the subject and value the opportunities to express their creativity within the structure of project work. Students contribute to lively discussion in lessons about their work. Unexpected approaches, activities and questions are used effectively.
- Teachers guide students effectively and provide good one to one support. Most students know how they are doing and how to improve their work. The best lessons also provide opportunities for contemplation and encourage students' creativity to flourish.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good

- The Key Stage 3 course is well structured to promote the development of students' personal language through two and three dimensional media. Most

work is devised in a thematic way to build upon previous experience, understanding and skills. Students grow in confidence as a result of the course structure and approaches taken.

- The Key Stage 4 courses clearly define the differences between the GCSE fine art and vocational art and design through approaches to teaching and project work. Projects are enriched by first hand experiences. For example, clay sculptures based on plant forms created by the Year 10 fine art students were inspired by a visit to the Yorkshire sculpture park.
- Most projects on the vocational course are also derived from primary sources; visiting artists and designers give relevance to work related briefs.
- There are productive links with the local general further education (GFE) college

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good

- The head of subject is an effective leader of an established team. Art and design staff work closely together with energy and purpose. The curriculum review following the previous inspection has led to much improved achievement and outcomes for students. The head of subject is involved closely with other art teachers in York and the group disseminates and shares good practice between schools.
- The departments' self-evaluation is a reflective document and identifies the main priorities but is insufficiently evaluative, for example, in the analysis of data focused on narrowing the gap in achievement between boys and girls. However, the department plan, supported by monitoring by senior managers, does identify this issue as an improvement priority. Overall, there are clear strategies for those students who are at risk of underachievement.

Inclusion

- The department provides an inclusive ethos for students with wide ranging ability. Teachers have a good rapport with students and support individual needs effectively. Different course options provide students with opportunities to grow in confidence.

Subject focus: breadth, depth and creativity of provision and outcomes

- This is a good feature due to the emphasis on learning through exploration and evaluation of different materials, followed up by opportunities to apply skills and understanding through thematically based projects. Students show confidence in discussion about why they have chosen particular pathways, media or subjects for their work. Individuality of approach is fostered closely so that students develop ownership of their work and a sense of creativity within a context of

structure and support. The visual impact of work is sometimes limited by lack of opportunity to work on a large scale.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raise the overall achievement of boys in GCSE courses
- use data more analytically to inform subject self-evaluation and planning
- increase opportunities for students to work on a larger scale.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop ICT and Art & 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

Linden Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector