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Ms L Page  
Acting Headteacher  
St Paul's Way Community School  
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Dear Ms Page

Ofsted subject survey: identifying good practice in art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 June 2008 to look at the impact of work with local arts organisations on students' learning in the subject.

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 refers mainly to work in collaboration with the Bow Arts Trust by students working in school and off-site with artists and other professionals. The Trust supports visual arts education. It provides studio and gallery space for practicing artists and conducts out-reach projects with the local community and its education institutions. Evidence was gathered through discussions with you, the subject leader, other staff and a group of students as well as analysis of students' work. Discussions were also held with the head of education at the Bow Arts Trust before I visited the school.

Features of good practice observed

- The collaborative work makes a good impact on the enjoyment and achievement of students of all abilities and is an important element of the school's activities as a specialist visual arts college, in particular through broadening links with the community it serves.
- The students make good progress in using materials and processes through seeing the possibilities modelled by creative practitioners. This enriches their work in subsequent projects although they do not always

have enough opportunities to extend their learning by using the same processes or materials again.

- Working with artists broadens students' knowledge of approaches to creative practice. Their existing views are challenged and they are helped to understand the role in society played by artists, craftspeople and designers alongside practical issues such as how they make a living.
- Students enjoy projects where the arts make connections with other curriculum areas. This raises standards in their creative practice as well as in other subjects with examples seen in science. However, such work has not been exploited to raise standards more widely across the curriculum.
- The students made good progress in taking responsibility for their work because the adults they were working with them expected them to do so.
- Teachers are committed to the projects, seeing value both to the students' achievement and to their own subject knowledge as artists and teachers.
- Students' experiences of learning are enriched by working with people who bring different approaches to teaching, encouraging creative problem solving and collaborative learning by modelling these themselves.
- Students find the opportunity to learn in other locations exciting and also enjoyed having outside practitioners coming into the school.
- Working alongside practicing artists and other professionals such as scientists has enabled students to tackle challenging contemporary themes and to see how the arts relate to other fields of activity.
- Students have developed a better understanding of local arts activity including the location of studios and galleries.
- Projects are planned well to meet the needs of the students including in subjects other than art and design where work is cross-curricular. Trust staff understand the educational context within which the school operates and ensure that the artists are aware of this.
- Where projects have been set up involving primary schools in work with artists, standards in the subject have been raised at these schools and when the students involved transfer to secondary school.
- Subject and school leadership are committed to the success of work of this nature. Overall aims for the relationship with the Trust are clear and are pursued with energy by the subject leader and reflected in the resources allocated by the school.
- Developing the relationship with the Trust has been a long term undertaking of some ten years. Effective and regular communication is at the heart of its success with individual projects evaluated effectively.

#### Areas for development

Alongside highlighting the strengths above, the visit also identified the following area for improvement which we discussed:

- bring together the outcomes of evaluating individual projects undertaken with the Trust to check how well the overall aims are being met and identify priorities for the future

- exploit the potential of collaborative work between art and design and other subjects to raise standards in the school more widely
- ensure students are able to build on the skills acquired through these collaborative projects in their subsequent work.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the gallery in school.

As I explained previously, 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