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Mr C Montacute
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Dear Mr Montacute

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Creative Learning

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 15-16 October 2008 to look at creative learning.

As outlined in my initial letter, the visit had a particular focus on the ways in which you develop creative learning and the impact this is having on achievement and standards and on students' personal 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of six lessons and two tutor sessions.

The overall effectiveness of the school's development of creative learning was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards and personal development

Creative modes of learning have helped raise standards and achievement at Wootton Bassett School and encouraged students to take on greater responsibility not only for their own learning but also in the school and wider community. There is a willingness to learn and participate in lessons, encouraged by the school's focus on creative and interactive learning. Progress is closely monitored, backed by a well structured target-setting process so that students are aware of their current levels of attainment and how they can improve. Standards of behaviour in lessons and throughout the

school are good. Students take pride in their achievements, which are fully celebrated by the school.

Quality of teaching and learning

All the lessons observed were good, well planned and structured. Students respond positively and are willing to volunteer information and to listen to the views of others. The school has invested heavily in the provision of information technology, which is extensive and available in all curricular areas and staff are becoming more aware of its potential to enhance the quality of their teaching. There is a comprehensive programme of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) led by the senior leadership team. Staff feel able to access relevant training and are encouraged to share good practice with their colleagues.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is an outstanding feature of the school. It is broad, innovative and tailored to meet the needs of the individual learner. The school has developed extensive links with outside agencies. Outside speakers and visitors give a context to what is taught in the classroom. To enhance the quality of creative learning, the school has introduced four cross-curricular days interspersed across the year and for all years. Activities are planned to help students make constructive links between subjects and to learn from each other through teamwork. The impact of this flexible approach can be seen in rising standards and achievement and in students' enjoyment and confidence. All the students interviewed were very positive about their experience at the school. They commented very favourably on the support they received from staff, the wide range of opportunities available to them, and the number of subjects they could study at different key stages.

At each key stage there are opportunities for students to develop their interests and skills creatively. There is flexibility over when students sit certain examinations, so that the more able can progress faster, take their GCSEs earlier and then undertake further study. This accelerated progress is founded on the confident skills and the level of engagement fostered by creative styles of learning. For others the World of Work (WOW) programme combines work done in school with opportunities to visit a range of local companies such as BMW and DHL to develop students' knowledge of industry and commerce as well as understand the expectations of employers. Students' learning is enhanced by opportunities for practical problem-solving and teamwork in a 'real world' context.

In the sixth form the school offers a wide range of academic and vocational courses, some in collaboration with the local FE college. Plans are well advanced to offer the International Baccalaureate in September 2009, giving a more formal framework to the development of cross-curricular links and the focus on independent learning developed in younger years. The school has worked closely with the independent sector in the planning and developmental stages for this programme.

Leadership and management

You and your senior leadership team have encouraged staff to be innovative and experimental in developing the broader curriculum to support creative ways of learning. Through outstanding leadership and well structured professional development, you have encouraged staff to take risks and to try different teaching styles and approaches. Your leadership team has also promoted greater staff involvement in the running of the school, a form of creative learning for them that matches the experience of their students. This empowerment has been disseminated to the students, who willingly volunteer for responsibility and are prepared to take risks and learn from their mistakes – a key element in creative learning.

Equality and diversity

The school's support structures and responsive curriculum encourage students of all abilities and backgrounds to participate confidently in their learning. This is an inclusive and caring community in which all students are supported and given many opportunities to succeed as independent and creative learners, with technical skills that equip them well for the world of work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the new cross curricular days are fully integrated into the curriculum and not seen as stand alone events
- developing a systematic way of monitoring the effectiveness of the cross curricular and themed events in developing independent, interactive and creative learning that supports students' continuing academic and personal development.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Derek Wiles
Additional Inspector