

24 October 2008

Mr J Bower
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Dear Mr Bower

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 and 23 October 2008 to look at work in art 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 the new curriculum on students to act and think like artists.

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 observations of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards in art and design

Achievement and standards are good overall.

- Students have a wide range of ability and experience of art, craft and design when entering the school. Their creative work in colour and design improves steadily during Years 7 to 9. In working from observation, students appreciate composition and pattern making in a range of 2D and 3D media. The 'pop art' project had inspired some amusing and effective individual interpretations by Year 9 students.
- In Year 10, applied art and design students show they are acquiring a good standard in colour and design development. Year 11 students are developing discernment and judgement in discussing and annotating their work. They are well motivated and apply themselves with enthusiasm. In one studio, students were using their interests and

hobbies successfully as a project theme, for example, fishing, game management, or architecture. They were compiling rich preparatory sheets, using expressive drawing, mixed media exploration and skilful use of techniques such as batik and printmaking. This was lively and exciting work for this stage of the year. While the depth and vitality of preparatory work is good overall, a small proportion of students over rely on secondary sources of imagery, exposing variation between Year 11 groups.

- Examination results for GCSE are good. Students, boys and girls, taking the single award achieved particularly well, with some vibrant work.
- Sixth form students taking AS level are able to discuss their ideas confidently; their sketchbooks and preparation show a growing appreciation of the creative process. Recent visits to Liverpool Tate and textile craft fair have stimulated individual progress and experimentation. Examination results at GCE A level are high, with an improving trend in 'value added' scores. Several students met during the visit were well informed about their art or design career intentions and what was available for them.
- Students are generally well motivated at all stages, they enjoy a good rapport with their teachers who are approachable and give guidance outside timetabled lessons and workshops held after school.

Quality of teaching and learning in art and design

Teaching and learning in art and design are good overall.

- The large majority of lessons seen were good and well managed. In these effective lessons, students were asked to speculate, evaluate and work out solutions for themselves. Teachers were skilful in questioning and used their subject knowledge and creative skills to inform one-to-one guidance. Several teachers use information and learning technology (ILT) with confidence, for example, to explain key words and vocabulary of the subject. Very occasionally in a lesson, a long project did not engage or sustain the progress of all students.
- In the studios, teachers use displays effectively to inspire and prompt students to analyse process and strive for good standards of work. Art work is promoted throughout school.
- Students' sketchbooks and homework are well integrated with lessons.
- Individual progress is monitored very carefully by teachers, particularly through well informed guidance. The 'whole school' strategies for individual target setting are now being established within the department.
- Students with learning difficulties/ and or disabilities (LDD) are supported unobtrusively in lessons. The art teachers have established their own criteria for identifying students in Year 7 who may be gifted or talented and are following students' progress in Year 8. The department's approach to inclusion is good.

Quality of the curriculum in art and design

The curriculum in art and design is satisfactory.

- The new curriculum in Year 7 offers a good range of 2D and 3D media and processes, although the key concept of creativity is not explicit enough in the new scheme of work.
- The curriculum promotes satisfactory progression between Years 7 and 9 overall. However, there is scope for more spontaneity and individuality through varying the length of projects and level of challenge. For example, the still life project undertaken in each year provides students with a good understanding of composition and pattern making but does not provide enough change in its present form to consolidate skills and increase expectations or experience.
- In Key Stage 3 and 4, the range of media and processes available is somewhat restricted to painting, mixed media and some use of digital media. In the last year three-dimensional experience has been strengthened with the appointment a new specialist teacher and through closer collaboration with textiles. However, this is an area for further development in order to broaden students' experience as creative practitioners.
- Enrichment opportunities contribute positively to the curriculum. Ceramic workshops have been introduced after school. External visits have been re-established successfully and further are planned for each year group to link with project work. Several students on the First Diploma art and design course have used the foundry and jewellery workshops at York College. Sixth formers may attend life drawing lessons in collaboration with a York school. Staff are planning visits from designer makers and artists to enrich and inform students understanding of the creative and cultural industries further.

Leadership and management of art and design

The leadership and management of art and design are satisfactory.

- Arts staff have worked together effectively with the support of senior staff, to minimise the impact of the head of department's unexpected illness. The disruption and necessary changes in timetable have been well managed by staff in temporary roles.
- The subject review and analysis of performance are accurate and realistic. Targets address the whole school priorities and focus well on planning for the new art curriculum. Priorities are supported by staff development, including opportunities to update subject knowledge.
- Available resources are organised and managed carefully. The accommodation consisting of six studios is satisfactory but two are located far from the others, with little storage and some isolation for staff hampering day-to-day communication.
- The capacity for further improvement is good based on the consistency of previous work and the quality assurance processes which are in place in the school.

Subject issue: the impact of the new secondary curriculum on students ability to think and act like artists

This is satisfactory.

- The new curriculum scheme of work for Year 7 onwards offers a good range of 2 and 3D experience but does not make the key concept of creativity explicit enough.
- Teachers show their understanding of creativity through their subject expertise, good questioning to groups and individuals which encourages students to think for themselves.
- External visits have been re-established and are enriching students' creativity and curiosity about the subject. Teachers are now identifying artists and designer makers for visits to the school to increase awareness about the creative and cultural industries.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- promote progression and creativity between Year 7 and 9 by consolidating and extending students' skills through creative approaches to learning
- broaden students' knowledge and experience of different artists, craftworkers and designers, creative processes and media to support their development as creative practitioners
- share and build on the successful approaches used within the department by continuing to improve accommodation and storage, consistency and communication between the teaching team.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop art and design across 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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Tweedie
Additional Inspector