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Dear Mrs Davies

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 and 20 November 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.

Art and design

The overall effectiveness was judged to be inadequate.

Achievement and standards in art and design

Achievement and standards are inadequate.

- Students have a typical range of ability and experience of art, craft and design when entering secondary school. Most students enjoy their creative work. However, students make insufficient progress in developing subject skills, knowledge and understanding resulting in below average standards.
- By the end of Year 9, a significant proportion of students have an insecure basis upon which to develop confident and personalised work at examination level through lesson or sketchbook activity. In

particular, more able students have experienced insufficient challenge to refine their skills and deepen their thinking.

- Individually, most students show interest in the subject and are thoughtful in their responses about art and design. However, experience of, and understanding about, designers and artists remains too limited to inform their own creative response to ideas, materials and processes. This includes students following a vocational course in Years 10 and 11.
- All students in 2008 entered for examinations passed either the first diploma or certificate in art and design. However, a low proportion of students achieved higher grades compared with their predictions.
- Students' behaviour in Key Stage 3 is not always as positive as it needs to be in order to make the most of lessons. The progress and achievements of a significant minority of students suffer as a consequence.
- Students' motivation and attitude to learning are good in Key Stage 4. They enjoy a good rapport with their teachers and value their experiences in three dimensional media which have stemmed from visits by ceramic craftworkers, a sculptor, and a visit to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Quality of teaching and learning in art and design

Teaching and learning in art and design are inadequate overall

- Teaching is too inconsistent to enable students to make the necessary progress over time and to refine their skills in two-dimensional and three-dimensional media.
- Lesson planning is generally satisfactory in considering the needs of different learners, with the exception of more able learners who are not always challenged. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons. In some lessons the aims and objectives give too much emphasis to completion of a particular task which results in too much similarity between the work of different students.
- Teachers' guidance to individual students is a stronger aspect of lessons. Students benefit from discussion about possible ways of developing work. The emphasis on safe working practice in art studios is good.
- Behaviour management is inconsistent. It is effective when the school teaching and learning behaviour policy is followed. It is inadequate when students' loud chatter is allowed to disrupt the progress of practical sessions. In lesson introductions, questioning is not always successful in engaging different students from the start.
- Several teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) in their teaching but the school recognise the need to involve students more actively in the use of ICT as a creative medium.
- Teachers use displays in their studios to set standards and to exemplify different assessment levels. Whilst this approach is not fully established with all students, where it is, students are clear about what they need to do to achieve a particular grade. There are fewer displays in public areas of the school that celebrate high achievement than usually seen.

- Project assessments and comments in sketchbooks are generally helpful but there is some variation in the quality of written feedback between teaching groups. There are good examples in some Year 7 sketchbooks. Students in Years 10 and 11 are aware of their target grades and keep good records of what they have to do to improve.
- The use of homework or extension activities designed to promote students' follow up or preparation for lessons is underdeveloped.
- Individual student's performance is tracked adequately by teachers. An on-line approach to assessment monitoring is being introduced across the school with the aim of making the process more systematic and rigorous.

Quality of the curriculum in art and design

The curriculum in art and design is satisfactory.

- The school's new curriculum, introduced into Year 7, provides students with a good range of experience in the use of different art media and processes. The key concept of creativity is made explicit in lessons.
- In Years 8 and 9 students the use of print and 3D media adds to students' experience. However, across Key Stage 3 progression is insufficiently structured, particularly in relation to the visual elements.
- In all years there are areas of teachers' expertise which are not fully exploited, for example textiles and other 3D media. There are too few teacher demonstrations planned or other references to the approaches used by different artists and designers.
- Students' first hand experiences, for example through their visit to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park or visiting craftworkers, enrich the curriculum successfully. However, direct experience of the design world or environments and commissions encountered by artists are underdeveloped.

Leadership and management of art and design

The leadership and management of art and design are inadequate

- The day to day management of the subject is satisfactory. However, the vision for the subject is insufficiently clear or ambitious to promote consistently high levels of provision and achievement. The subject review and analysis of performance accurately identifies many of the priorities for improvement identified through the inspection. However, the department's action plan is not specific enough in its present form, on timescales and responsibilities, to support rigorous monitoring and informed evaluation.
- Available resources, including accommodation, are organised and managed efficiently. However, variations in teachers' subject knowledge impacts on the effectiveness with which resources are used in teaching.
- Subject staff value the support of the senior leadership team who are committed to raising standards in the subject.

Subject issue

The impact of the new secondary curriculum on students' ability to 'think and act like artists' is satisfactory.

- The school's new scheme of work for Year 7 onwards offers students an exciting range of opportunities to explore experimental approaches. Students' sketchbooks in Year 7 show the impact on the sensitivity and potential of their ideas.
- Teachers are identifying possible creative practitioners to build on the success of recent visits and visitors in Key Stage 4.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it has a positive impact on achievement and standards in all years and for all abilities
- broaden students' knowledge, understanding and experience of different artists, craftworkers and designers to support their own development as creative practitioners
- strengthen subject leadership and management by establishing more links with other experts in the subject and by developing more robust action planning, monitoring and evaluation.

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