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Mrs M Dudley
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Dear Mrs Dudley

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 and 18 March 2009 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 secondary subject curriculum that challenges you to develop students who 'think and act like artists, craftworkers and designers, working creatively and intelligently'.

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, an informal meeting with the AS level group to see their work and observations of four lessons.

Art and design

The overall effectiveness was judged satisfactory with good features.

Achievement and standards in art and design

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Students join the school with varied prior experience of art, craft and design on entry to the school. Overall, satisfactory standards are attained over Key Stage 3.
- In Year 7 students make good progress and respond well to the strong focus on understanding the formal elements. In Year 9 for some

aspects of art practice, students' skills are underdeveloped, for example in painting.

- Students use the opportunities to evaluate their work effectively. For example, boys in Year 9 presented their ideas confidently, when in the role of product and graphic designers talking about a new invention.
- Projects in Year 10 encourage students to think about the juxtaposition of traditional and contemporary culture, for example, in their project inspired by Japanese printmakers such as Hokusai, architecture and animation. Students develop good compositional skills, but their use of colour and confidence in handling larger scale work are less secure.
- The numbers of students who opt to study art and design in Years 10 and 11 has remained steady and around 50 are entered for GCSE. Examination results are broadly average. Boys achieved particularly well in 2008 in relation to their other subjects.
- A small proportion of students opt for art and design courses in the sixth form. The school is discontinuing provision as part of local authority planned rationalisation. Pass rates are high at AS and GCE A level. Whilst students generally make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment, in 2008 their progress was good.
- Sixth form students taking AS level are able to discuss their ideas confidently; they enjoy the increased independence projects in using textiles, mixed media or photography.
- Students enjoy a good rapport with their teachers and appreciate their approachability. Students in all years enjoy the subject and behave well.

Quality of teaching and learning in art and design

Teaching and learning in art and design are satisfactory with good features.

- There was some good teaching observed during the inspection; however the overall impact of teaching on learning and progress is satisfactory.
- In the best lessons teachers use questioning skilfully when students work in groups or pairs. This encourages students to think for themselves and for teachers to make sure that students understand key concepts. The impact is that students learn to evaluate their own work and that of their peers, speaking and presenting with some confidence, particularly at Key Stage 3.
- Making enough time and opportunity for creativity to develop is a variable aspect of teaching. In lessons where students make good progress in their creative development activities are well planned to ensure that creativity is promoted. However, too much discussion or teacher talk in some lessons leaves insufficient time for individuals to develop artwork beyond a basic level. Some activities present insufficient challenge for a significant proportion of the group.
- Students benefit from well informed guidance from their teachers. Assessment monitoring during lessons and on-line is clearly focussed on identifying any potential underachievement or indications of significantly good progress. Written feedback and lesson feedback to students about their creative work is constructive with encouraging

praise. However, not all students receive clear feedback about the improvements required in relation to examination objectives.

- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and those who are gifted and talented, are supported satisfactorily but unobtrusively by their teachers.

Quality of the curriculum in art and design

The curriculum in art and design is satisfactory.

- Schemes of work for Year 7 have been adapted to take account of the new secondary curriculum. There is a good emphasis on establishing formal elements, which are consolidated in Year 8. The range of media and processes is adequate, including ceramics, printmaking and mixed media with some use of digital media.
- Projects in Years 7, 8 and 9 link with languages to explore different cultures such as Mexico and Egypt.
- In Key Stages 3 and 4 there are insufficient opportunities to develop students' individual, expressive responses to stimuli. For example, to use aspects of students' local community or environment with the aim of exploring more fully 'first hand' images, photographs, drawings and research.
- Visits are used effectively in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. For example, sixth formers visit the Yorkshire sculpture park or a local gallery. Year 9 students identified as gifted or talented have visited Rome with students taking a modern foreign language. Year 7 students have designed sculptures for the 'Groundworks' sculpture project in a local park. Plans are being made to extend visits to students in Year 10.
- Contacts between students and creative practitioners are at an early stage of development.

Leadership and management of art and design

The leadership and management of art and design are satisfactory.

- The acting subject leader and the acting head of expressive arts are managing the subject effectively during the maternity leave of the current post holder. There are satisfactory arrangements for staffing to cover the absence in the short term.
- The subject analysis of performance by senior managers is thorough. Low achievement for girls in 2008 has been analysed thoroughly by managers and acted upon to avoid underachievement in the future.
- The subject evaluation prepared by the subject leader is largely accurate. The student voice is considered, Year 7 having completed a questionnaire about their experiences in art and design. The subject action plan covers the management of assessment and monitoring well but does not give sufficient focus to reviewing curriculum schemes.
- Available resources are organised and managed efficiently. During the last two years as new accommodation has been built the disruption to

students has been minimised. The new studios are spacious and well equipped for printmaking and ceramics. Technician support is good.

- The amount of creative display throughout the school is less than that usually seen.
- The capacity for further improvement is good. The school leadership team is clearly focussed on whole school improvements and the contribution of the subject. The tracking of students individual progress electronically is well established. The strategies to improve behaviour are having a positive impact. Recent 'in-depth' subject reviews by senior managers for subjects are thorough but have not yet reached art and design.

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

This is satisfactory.

- The use of external visits or working with artists in residence, to increase students' awareness of the creative and cultural industries is limited and focussed mainly on students identified as gifted and talented and sixth formers.
- The curriculum scheme of work for Year 7 onwards offers a good foundation, particularly in the formal elements of the subject in two dimensional media but less so in three dimensional media. The key concepts of the new curriculum are implicit in the scheme but require further development on how they are to be developed throughout the key stage.
- Teachers show good use of formative assessment and questioning to groups and individuals which encourages students to think for themselves. Year 10 students are encouraged to develop their work in a sequential way.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that the level of challenge is consistently high to ensure that students develop their practical skills in depth, express personal viewpoints confidently and use first hand experiences regularly.
- increase students' awareness of contemporary practice and career opportunities that exist in the creative and cultural sector by establishing more external visits and contact with creative practitioners.
- develop contacts with art and design teachers in other schools and practitioners in the community in order to share and stimulate good practice.

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.

Ofsted gathers information on the immediate and longer-term impact of survey inspections, both on the institutions themselves, and with a view to improving its own processes. To this end, I should be grateful if you would complete the attached questionnaire and return it within the next ten days. We have also just sent a copy of the questionnaire by email. Please return your completed questionnaire to either the email or postal address on the form, not to me. We may also contact some schools by telephone after several months in order for us to gain a picture of longer-term impact. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Tweedie
Additional Inspector