

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



3 February 2010

Mr S Brady  
Headteacher  
Forest Hill School  
Dacres Road  
Forest Hill  
London  
SE23 2XN

Dear Mr Brady

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: art, craft and design

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 18 and 19 January 2010 to look at work in art, craft 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 how effectively students learn to draw confidently and creatively.

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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews, scrutiny of documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of art, craft and design is satisfactory.

Achievement in art, craft and design

Achievement in art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- From well below average starting points, the students make satisfactory progress in their first three years in exploring the properties of a range of materials and learning about the work of other creative practitioners. Their attainment remains below that seen nationally by the end of Year 9 because they lack confidence in applying what they learn independently.
- Progress at GCSE level in Years 10 and 11 had fallen in recent years and was inadequate for students completing the course last year. However, it has improved this year because of better targeted teaching and a more

structured curriculum. While their overall attainment remains below average, current students are making satisfactory progress from their starting points and are on target to achieve higher results than last year's group.

- In the sixth form, students make insufficient progress in relation to their low attainment at the start of the course. The emphasis on raising standards at GCSE has not yet impacted on improvement at AS and A level where standards remains below average.
- Students enjoy the subject. They behave well in lessons and show enthusiasm when learning through practical tasks. Most use equipment carefully and show consideration to their fellow students.
- At all ages, students make relatively good progress in collecting visual resources and exploring starting points for their projects. However, they have weaker skills in developing and resolving their ideas. The legacy of this is most evident among sixth-form students. Staff are well-focused on tackling this weakness in order that more GCSE students reach the higher grades and to contribute to students' progression in the sixth form.

#### Quality of teaching of art, craft and design

The quality of teaching of art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- Scrutiny of students' portfolios and discussions with them show that the quality of teaching has improved since September and is satisfactory. Notably, more careful monitoring of the progress of GCSE students, coupled with individual support and intervention, has led to better progress. Marking and guidance have improved for students of all ages.
- The teachers have good subject knowledge, positive relationships with the students and manage the learning environment well, including resources and equipment.
- Lessons are well-structured and orderly. However, the students do not always understand the purpose of their learning deeply enough to help them to take the initiative in developing their work. Discussion is a regular feature of lessons and is useful, but teachers' questioning does not routinely test or extend students' understanding thoroughly.
- Lesson planning is adequate to meet the needs of most students. However, opportunities are missed to tailor learning activities so that students of differing ability make the best possible progress. For example, more able students are not always asked more challenging questions during discussions.

#### Quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design

The quality of the curriculum in art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- The curriculum has been revised to provide a clearer structure for projects for students of all ages. The impact of this is most evident at GCSE level where underachievement was greatest. The good plans for improvement

in the sixth-form curriculum are not yet embedded. However, documentation indicates that students now experience a more logical acquisition of skills and knowledge and engaging approaches to learning.

- The Key Stage 3 curriculum provides a satisfactory introduction to materials and processes. However, there are too few opportunities for students to experience craft-based approaches or use digital technology as a creative medium, to build a good foundation for further study.
- The themes studied at all ages are appropriate, relating well to the students' interests.
- Older students have satisfactory opportunities to visit galleries to experience the achievements of other creative practitioners at first-hand; younger students have too few such experiences. Students of all ages have insufficient opportunities to see creative practitioners at work to strengthen their understanding of the visual development of ideas.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design

The effectiveness of leadership and management in art, craft and design is satisfactory.

- In recent years, subject leadership has not managed to arrest the decline in attainment, particularly at examination level. The school began to act to remedy the situation in the latter part of the previous academic year. The school's actions to promote improvement have clearly gained from the impetus of a new subject leader, for example in developing teaching and the curriculum.
- Teamwork among staff is good as evident in the clear and shared vision for the future. Priorities for development in subject plans are well-considered and ambitious with measurable targets for most of the goals identified.
- Subject monitoring is largely effective in identifying strengths and weaknesses in provision. The outcomes of monitoring are being used increasingly well to identify what to do next.
- The school's specialist status for performing arts has made a limited impact on attainment in the subject.

Subject issue: how effectively do students learn how to draw confidently and creatively?

This aspect is inadequate.

- Drawing is valued as a basic skill by students and staff. However, the students' ability to draw for a range of purposes, or to understand how drawing is used by creative practitioners, is limited. They draw most successfully from secondary sources but have too few opportunities to draw directly in response to experiences. As a result, they do not develop enough fluency in drawing to use it as a tool for developing their ideas.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving students' achievement, especially in the sixth form, by:
  - ensuring the purpose of learning is better understood by the students so they are able to be more independent in making decisions
  - using questioning more effectively to promote the students' independent critical thinking and check they are making good progress
  - adapting lesson tasks to meet the students' differing needs more fully
- improving the curriculum by:
  - giving students a more comprehensive introduction to the uses of drawing and developing their skills and understanding more systematically
  - widening the range of experiences, especially at Key Stage 3, to include more craft, use of digital technology and direct contact with creative practitioners' work and at work.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop art, craft and design in 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

Stephen Long  
Her Majesty's Inspector