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Dr G Taylor  
Headteacher  
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Dear Dr Taylor

Ofsted 2010-11 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 6 and 7 May 2010 to look at work in art, craft and design.

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 with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; observation of eight lessons or part-lessons; and a visit to the Chetwynd Sixth Form Centre.

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

Achievement in art, craft and design

Students' achievement in art, craft and design is good.

- From average starting points, students make good progress in Years 7 to 9 in developing their skills in two-, three-dimensional and digital media. Their enjoyment is evident in their attentiveness and pace of learning in lessons and in the above-average proportion choosing to continue to an examination course in the subject at the end of Year 9.
- Boys and girls continue to progress well in Years 10 and 11 attaining high grades in relation to other subjects and schools nationally. A small proportion attain A\*. The quality of research is markedly higher than in earlier work. Depth of understanding, personalisation of ideas and

refinement of skills are evident, particularly where students continue out of school, for example through sketchbook work, but this is variable.

- The students who continue to sixth-form courses in the subject respond well to the high expectations set by specialist teachers and others encountered at the sixth-form centre. The scale of work handled, expressive and emotive qualities developed on the AS and A-level courses, and creativity and craft combined on the BTEC course, are evident strengths.
- Students develop positive attitudes in the subject, working collaboratively and supportively. They respond sensitively in lessons that include challenging subject matter, such as a Year 7 group discussing the impact of war on art and a Year 10 group respecting the symbolic values of different cultures. However, leadership skills developing early on in the subject are not always maximised, for example through initiatives led by sixth formers.

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

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

- Teachers use their specialist expertise well, having a particularly good impact on learning in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form, where different teachers contribute to students' experience. There is a successful balance between teachers' shared responsibility, evident in consistent expectations made of students, with initiative and individual interpretation of schemes.
- Available resources are used effectively to stimulate students' curiosity and sustain their interest. Other students' work is shared informatively in lessons and through display. However, while the ceramics studio and school's computer rooms are used well to deliver specific units of work, computer-aided teaching and learning are not integrated regularly.
- Lessons are thoughtfully constructed to ensure that students with wide-ranging abilities are supported, for example through guidance sheets and demonstration. Not all students assume responsibility progressively, continuing to depend on teacher support which limits the extent of their creativity. However, others thrive valuing the open-ended challenges set.
- Staff are working together to share best practice in assessment, the use of diagnostic marking in particular. Accurate grading is moderated between teachers and other schools. Individual dialogue between teachers and students is constructive. The minority of students who remain unclear about lesson objectives are less able to evaluate their own progress.

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

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

- Students in Years 7 to 9 have access to a wide range of media. Coverage ensures that students work on a variety of scales, using two-, three-dimensional and digital processes referencing art, craft and design from

different times and places. Links with other subjects, including design and technology which shares the curriculum model, are at an early stage.

- Topics used on examination courses are adapted well to students' needs and interests. For example, a focus on body adornment in different cultures included examples of contemporary culture, captivating the interest of students. A project developed with the museum's service made excellent links between the locality, artists and students' direct experience.
- Opportunities for students to learn how to draw in different ways, including from observation, memory and imagination, are integrated into schemes of work in all key stages. However, some students still underestimate the value of drawing regularly, and rely too heavily on secondary sources, indicating a need for more discrete drawing sessions.
- Opportunities are limited for students to enrich their experience through gallery visits or work with visiting artists. However, sixth form students have residential opportunities and their experience is also widened by working with students and teachers from other schools. Trips abroad have also incorporated well led gallery visits by art staff.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of art, craft and design

The leadership and management of art, craft and design are good.

- Good working relationships have been built within the department and with senior leaders ensuring that the subject is valued by students and has a public presence in the school. While the department rightly evaluates links with local industries as an area to strengthen, collaboration with other schools sharing sixth-form provision is well established.
- The contribution of the department to wider initiatives in school is considered and constructive, such as the choice and use of an artist, and animation, to promote family learning. The proven impact of provision on students' achievements affords a good basis for further innovation, for example in response to national stimuli such as 'Arts Award' or 'Big Draw'.
- A strength of subject leadership is the systematic monitoring informing accurate self-evaluation. Increasing attention is paid to assessment data to ensure that students with different abilities progress equally. Lesson observations, work reviews and planning documents are evaluated regularly and the feedback used to prioritise and target improvements.
- The subject contributes well to community cohesion, for example through strategies designed to increase students' awareness of communities beyond their own experience and through a conscious effort to create a departmental ethos that adds to the school as a community. Computers are also being used to strengthen community links, including with parents.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing students' high performance and participation further by:

- promoting continuous engagement with the subject, for example through regular use of sketchbooks in all years to capture out of school experience
- strengthening links between key stages, for example by embracing the work of primary schools and creative practitioners
- integrating the use of computers into teaching and learning, for example through exemplifying the purpose and application of the subject in the wider world.

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

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton  
Her Majesty's Inspector