

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



14 December 2007

Mr S Jones
Headteacher
King Edward VI Community College
Ashburton Road
Totnes
Devon
TQ9 5JX

Dear Mr Jones

Ofsted subject survey: identifying good practice in art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 December 2007 to look at the impact of the gallery on students' learning and achievement.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included discussions with you, the subject leader, other staff and a group of students. I also observed a lesson in the gallery and looked at work completed by the students as a result of visiting the gallery.

Features of good practice observed

- The presence of the gallery develops students' awareness that exhibiting work is a natural part of the process of art making and that creative practice offers vocational possibilities. This is much aided by the professional nature of the gallery space.
- Working in the gallery reinforces students' understanding that much is to be learned by looking at the work of others. It encourages them to visit other galleries independently while enriching their experiences in a geographical area where access to major galleries is limited.
- Having the gallery on site enables students to refer back easily to artists' work if the development of their own work requires it.

- The direct access to art work afforded by the gallery enables students to engage fully with the physical nature of artists' practice. They develop a good understanding of the properties of materials and the impact of scale and dimension on the audience. This gives them confidence to develop their own work by using what they see as models of practice. As a result, standards are high overall and reflect teachers' high expectations.
- The students develop good skills in recording key features of artists' work, analysing how it is made and questioning the intentions behind it. Older students make rapid progress because they have more opportunities to work in the gallery. Workshops and discussions led by exhibiting artists make a strong impact on learning because the processes they go through are exposed fully to students.
- Through the gallery the school fosters strong relationships with local artists. The gallery provides an important boost to local arts development and the community as a whole. In return the school's curriculum is enriched by the range of practice these artists bring.
- Teaching and learning in the gallery is most effective where teachers are involved in planning exhibitions, or are thoroughly informed about their content. In these circumstances they ensure that maximum value for students is extracted from what is on show.
- The gallery is used well by staff to exhibit students' work. This celebration of success is important for developing students' confidence as well as allowing them to learn about showing their work in a professional space.
- The gallery affords excellent opportunities for teachers' professional development. A number have had exhibitions of their work, sustaining and developing their creative practice. Some exhibitions by other artists have involved training for teachers, for example about particular techniques, or have encouraged them to extend the curriculum by exemplifying new or different approaches to themes or processes.
- The development of the gallery over the 15 years since its opening reflects the school's strong commitment to the arts. The gallery is an important aspect of the school's identity as well as that of the art department. Collaborative work between key staff, such as the subject leader for art and the gallery manager, is good. The school also works hard with other local arts providers to ensure its contribution to the community is part of a coherent package.

Areas for development

The visit highlighted many advantages brought by the gallery but we also discussed ways to move forward including:

- getting subject staff more involved in planning the gallery programme. While this currently reflects local practice it does not regularly include a breadth of work, such as from other countries and cultures. Nor does information about forthcoming exhibitions always arrive early enough for teachers to plan how to use it with students

- ensuring students have equal access to the gallery as a resource, especially in Key Stage 3 where some currently miss out while others might use it a number of times
- developing the gallery as a vehicle for students to learn not just about how and why work is made but about how the process of exhibiting affects the way work is received by its audience. This was discussed both in relation to students looking at the exhibitions of the work of other artists as well as thinking about how to show their own work
- analysing more systematically the impact of the gallery on students' achievement so as to inform further developments, for example in programme content or approaches to teaching and learning.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the gallery in school.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector