

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



08 December 2008

Mr D Priestley
Headteacher
Greenfield School Community and Arts College
Greenfield Way
Newton Aycliffe
County Durham
DL5 7LF

Dear Mr Priestley

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Creative Learning

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students during my visit on 2-3 December 2008 to look at creative learning.

As outlined in our initial letter, the visit had a particular focus on the ways in which you develop creative learning and the impact this is having on achievement and standards and on students' personal development.

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 observation of 10 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of your school's development of creative learning was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards and personal development

Creative subjects produce the most successful examination results. In art, for example, students can enter GCSE two years early, and start A level studies in Year 10. Students show great confidence in lessons. Students who have been involved in research into creative learning or projects such as the Bowes Museum Cloth of Tales show enormous pride. The school is aware that a limited number has participated in these activities and their experience needs to be shared more widely. Students are increasingly aware that they are developing skills for 21st century employment. There is more ownership of work than is generally seen and a high level of participation in the wide range

of extra-curricular activities. The school is successfully helping students to remove the barriers that have prevented them from learning.

Quality of teaching and learning in relation to the survey

Students describe a growing number of teachers who are offering more imaginative and stimulating lessons whilst others still are less confident or have not really grasped the concept of creative learning. Increasingly teachers are trying to make all of the lesson activities more enjoyable, using games, graphic first-hand experience, or imaginative ways of provoking reflection and exploration of ideas. This makes students readier to learn, more responsive, and more likely to take responsibility for their own learning. Frequently teachers offer different ways for students to engage with new ideas, or apply their new understanding. The use of drama, drawing, experiment or hands on experience runs through English, history and modern foreign languages, for example, as well as science and technology. Teachers are increasingly offering choices, and, in the best practice, insisting that students make choices about the way that they work. This is boosting students' confidence and self-esteem. It is giving them more ownership of their work so that they are driven to complete assignments. It is encouraging them to experiment or offer answers because they know that failure is seen as an essential part of the learning process.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum gives outstanding support for creative learning. The established enrichment programme has been enhanced with carefully planned developments to embed creative learning through all aspects of the school's provision. As a result the enjoyment which pervades music, dance and drama is now spreading across other departments. Links with Creative Partnerships enabled the school to anticipate the creative and personal skills that are now highlighted in the new Key Stage 3 curriculum. Through links between subjects such as PE and science or art and music students are learning to see the relevance and real life applications of the concepts they encounter. Creative enrichment activities provide added enjoyment, motivation and a range of new skills. Across a growing number of subjects students are aware of the creative and problem solving skills they are developing, and can reflect on other contexts where these skills will be useful. The innovative range of extra-curricular activities now matches the interests of a wider range of students.

Leadership and management of the aspect

Leadership and management of creative learning are outstanding, based on a very clear vision of how the school needs to develop to prepare students effectively for economic and personal well being in the 21st century. A Creativity Development Group meets regularly to co-ordinate and evaluate the different strands of innovation. The mission to develop creative approaches to learning is embedded in all subjects through performance management, development planning, professional development programmes, links with the community and the school's inclusion strategy. It also runs through the

excellent links with partner primary and secondary schools, Creative Partnerships, local industry and employers, and the agencies which ensure students' well-being. Self-evaluation is central to staff and students' working. As a result senior leaders have an extremely clear understanding of the spread of creative approaches and barriers to further development. The outcomes of research commissioned through Creative Partnerships are transforming subject leadership and teachers' attitudes. This in turn is transforming students' attitudes to learning.

Equality and diversity

The creative approaches to ensuring equality and diversity are very effective. The ICAN inclusion centre is inventive and ground breaking in the way it identifies and sources support to re-integrate students who are seen as at risk of turning away from learning. Students who are not engaged in an active lifestyle are identified and invited to suggest what other activities might engage them. This process has been very successful in changing students' attitudes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the confidence of teaching staff to explore and make use of more creative approaches to learning
- build capacity by spreading the lessons learned from individual projects more widely amongst the current students.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop creative styles of learning in your school.

As explained in our 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

Ross Parker
Additional Inspector