

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)



Mr A Wills  
Headteacher  
Ferndown Upper School  
Cherry Grove  
Ferndown  
BH22 9EY

Dear Mr Wills

Ofsted subject survey: identifying good practice in art and design

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 20 and 21 October 2009 with Janet Mercer HMI and Stephen Long HMI.

The visit focused on the impact of the visual arts at Ferndown on the community, students' personal development and well-being, and personalisation. Inspectors also looked at how effectively students learn to draw with confidence and creativity.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included discussions with members of staff and students, observation of lessons, scrutiny of work displayed and analysis of key documentation provided for the visit.

Features of good practice observed

Community

- A high priority is given to developing the community dimension of the subject, evident in the designated role of community coordinator and timetabled opportunities for subject staff to develop community links.
- An innovative programme enables students following the Foundation Course to develop a role as artists in residence to local primary schools, contributing to their awareness of community-based opportunities.
- Links with other schools in the locality are promoted through workshops such as printmaking for middle school students and life drawing for sixth formers who benefit from working alongside their peers in other schools.

- A wide range of visits promotes students' awareness of the national and global communities. The most effective international visits deepen their understanding of art, craft and design created in that area of the world.
- A school loan collection of work provides opportunities for the public to appreciate the creative achievements of Ferndown students, for example in hospitals. A CD showing students' sketchbooks is also made available.
- The strong presence of art work exhibited professionally in the school and grounds prepares the students well to respect and respond to art exhibited in galleries and public spaces in communities outside school.

#### Personalisation and personal development

- Students are encouraged to maintain reflective journals alongside sketchbooks. The regular dialogue recorded between students and their teachers shows how and why students' individual pathways develop.
- The wide range of specialist accommodation, resources and staff expertise enables students to make informed choices and pursue two-, three-dimensional or digital media on a variety of scales.
- All students take at least one examination in art, craft and design, remaining enthusiastic, well-motivated and engaged. They enjoy the strong practical element and value the minimal emphasis on writing.
- Different groups of students are integrated well into the school through the subject. Work with visiting artists is used strategically to build positive relationships with adults and between students.
- Students' respect for the work of others is evident in the well cared for exhibitions of work throughout the school. Sculptures in the playground, murals on the walls outside and hangings in the hall are appreciated by all.
- The continuous efforts of the Head of Specialism to communicate, through illustrated newsletters and celebration banners, the creative achievements of the school contributes to students' pride in their school.
- Many students improve their confidence in drawing by learning how to control a range of graphic media, particularly in response to direct observation. Life drawing widens their approach and repertoire of skills.

Areas for consideration, which we discussed, include:

- developing intergenerational initiatives through the subject to strengthen links with the local community and use of the locality as a stimulus
- strengthening opportunities for students to recognise and refine personal and social skills developed through the subject and across the curriculum
- encouraging students to express their feelings, capture their memories and communicate their emotions through adventurous drawing.

I hope these observations are useful in building on your success at Ferndown in and through art, craft and design education.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton  
Her Majesty's Inspector