

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



14 February 2011

Mr G Yerosimou  
Headteacher  
St John's Church of England VC School  
Tower Road  
Epping  
Essex  
CM16 5EN

Dear Mr Yerosimou

### **Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: design and technology (D&T)**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit with my colleague, Phil Romain HMI, on 1 and 2 February 2011 to look at work in D&T.

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 included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work and observation of nine lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is satisfactory.

### **Achievement in D&T**

Students' achievement in D&T is satisfactory.

- Standards in D&T are improving following a period of very low attainment and progress. Most students made satisfactory progress in the lessons seen. The number of students taking D&T and engineering courses at Key Stage 4 is modestly increasing from a low base. These students reach standards in line with the national average by the end of Key Stage 4, and the outcomes for BTEC engineering are above average.
- Students are keen to make products and the emphasis placed on acquiring practical skills is much enjoyed. They respect and follow health and safety procedures. For example, Year 11 students studying engineering demonstrate very good awareness of risk as it relates to specific work situations. Students' skills in analysing and synthesising information to

deepen their understanding of designing and to make connections with the practical skills they are learning are developing. However, they remain relatively weaker aspects of their work and this is demonstrated in the limited improvement in their annotation skills as they move through the school.

### **Quality of teaching of D&T**

The quality of teaching of D&T is satisfactory.

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of D&T are sound and developing well as a result of the positive impact of specialist training and support. Students respect teachers' practical knowledge and follow instructions and learn well as a result of teachers' accurate demonstrations. Teachers model the use of specialist language well and students are responding in lessons. Where teaching has a stronger impact on students' learning, lessons are structured to provide students with opportunities to make design decisions and are planned to challenge them.
- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. The discrete provision provided by the artist in residence contributes effectively to the enjoyment, teamwork and developing confidence of students who are most in need of this support. Students' behaviour is satisfactory in lessons. Most students follow instructions well but some, who are still developing their concentration skills, do not listen carefully enough to be able to confidently work with increasing independence.
- Teachers' plans describe what students are expected to do but lesson objectives and outcomes do not focus sufficiently on what they will learn. Planning lacks sufficient clarity to inform future planning and ensure that all students make good progress. Older students, particularly those undertaking GCSE product design, receive very detailed and personalised guidance to support them in improving the quality of their work. In comparison, the marking and feedback that Key Stage 3 students receive is not as detailed or developmental.

### **Quality of the curriculum in D&T**

The quality of the curriculum in D&T is satisfactory.

- The curriculum provides adequate coverage of electronics and systems and control but mechanical control is less developed in the current scheme of work. Provision meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, insufficient opportunities are planned to progressively enable students to plan and make decisions about their work and to confidently develop functional and innovative products.
- Planning demonstrates that the school is moving forward in developing a firmer foundation in Key Stage 3 to support the study of GCSEs at Key Stage 4. Support for examination groups through work experience, revision and catch-up sessions contribute well to their achievement.

- Curriculum enrichment, in the form of visits, engineering days and competitions, promotes engineering, and the school is sharing the financial benefits its status brings with local primary schools. However, opportunities are missed to inspire and further develop students' understanding of engineering in the schemes of work. For example, the schemes, particularly at Key Stage 3, do not fully reflect how students are expected to apply their scientific knowledge and understanding to the design and development of the products that they make in D&T.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T**

Leadership and management in D&T are satisfactory.

- The school is aware of the strengths in provision and where further steps are needed. Satisfactory systems are in place for monitoring the department's work and to ensure that due attention is given to health and safety. Students' progress is adequately monitored: underachievement is identified and support is provided. With the strong support of senior leaders, the subject leader has brought about improvements in provision that have had a positive impact on standards.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- promoting students' understanding of all aspects of engineering to inform and inspire them about the made world
- clearly defining lesson objectives and outcomes and using the information when planning so that all students make better progress
- ensuring students have more opportunities to plan and make decisions about their work to develop functional and innovative products.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop D&T in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Gina White**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**