

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)



27 May 2011

Mr S Jackson  
Headteacher  
The Blue School  
Kennion Road  
Wells  
Somerset  
BA5 2NR

Dear Mr Jackson

### **Ofsted 2011–12 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 on 17 and 18 May 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: discussions with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of nine lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

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

Achievement in D&T is good.

- Overall attainment is high at GCSE and in the sixth form. Products of good quality, demonstrating a range of skills, are produced by all year groups and in all aspects of D&T. Students work with increasing levels of independence and generally with a good consideration for health and safety.
- Progress for most students is at least good, but the lack of a secure baseline of the D&T skills and capabilities of students hinders the school in demonstrating where progress is outstanding. Gifted and talented students are identified and the enhanced activity days provided for them extend their learning. Students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make equal progress to their peers due to the adaptations

made to the curriculum and the good quality support they receive from adults in lessons.

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

The quality of teaching in D&T is good.

- Staff are dedicated, hardworking and have a passion for their subject. They have excellent subject knowledge and expertise. Excellent relationships exist within the department, with students and with parents and carers. These enhance the learning opportunities for all students as well as providing additional support for those students whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Teachers' questioning skills are strong and they provide excellent oral feedback in lessons. Sometimes teachers spend too much time talking to the class and, on these occasions, opportunities are missed for students to have more control and responsibility for their learning. Students do not have enough opportunities for peer- and self-assessment. Not all students have a good understanding of the National Curriculum levels and age-related expectations. Students help to set their own targets, but do not all have discrete learning targets.

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

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

- Overall, the curriculum has helped to sustain consistently high external examination results at GCSE and A level. The modelling of final products is effective, but opportunities are missed for modelling at the earlier stages of designing. Students have access to a wide range of materials in Key Stage 3 and develop strong skills in material manipulation. Many of the projects use single types of materials and involve students choosing from a number of modifications rather than really developing 'designerly thinking'. Students do not have enough opportunities to solve 'real-life' problems that provide open-ended outcomes.
- Project books have been generated by staff over a number of years to support students' learning in Key Stage 3. A considerable amount of time, effort and thought has gone into their generation. They provide a clear indication of how well the student is doing on the cover and background information and activities inside. Students said they liked the booklets and in particular the use of the front cover. However, some of the booklets seen during the visit were not as easy to read as they should be and sometimes the tasks do not provide secure evidence of learning, understanding or progress.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T is good.

- Leaders and managers have attended a good range of professional development courses. Monitoring and evaluation are securely established with a clear focus on learning and raising attainment.
- The school has ensured that computer-aided design and manufacturing are key components in product design and graphics where two- and three-dimensional applications are developed. The introduction of laser-cut stencils into a textiles project at Key Stage 3 demonstrates that issues raised through the departmental and school development plans are acted on effectively and that self-evaluation is secure.

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

- having an early rigorous baseline assessment of students' capabilities and attainment when they join the school in Year 7
- using more peer- and self-assessment so that students can accurately measure their own progress and help to ensure that their targets are challenging
- reviewing the curriculum in Key Stage 3 to ensure that, in all aspects of the subject, students have a secure knowledge of current technological developments and that there is a better balance between solving real problems through designing alongside the development of manufacturing skills
- ensuring that the project booklets used in Key Stage 3 are fit for purpose, enhance learning, and provide value for money.

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

**Steffi Penny**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**