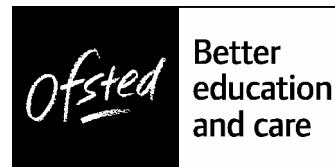


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21 September 2006

Ms Canning
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Canning

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science and Design & Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my joint visit with Peter Toft HMI on 18-19 September 2006 to look at work in science and design and technology.

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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

Science

The overall effectiveness of Science was judged to be good.

Achievement and Standards

Achievement and standards in science are good.

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are consistently and significantly above the national average both in terms of point score and when compared with similar schools.
- At GCSE pupils show attainment well above the national average for the higher grades of A*-C. The combined science GCSE performance is significantly above the average for subjects in this school.

- Pupils demonstrate great maturity and very positive attitudes towards learning. They apply themselves well, show good behaviour and contribute to lessons in responsible ways.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in science is consistently good or better.

- Lessons are well planned and contain a good variety of well sequenced activities that are designed to match the learning objectives. Pupils speak very highly of their teachers, the way they teach and the good support they give.
- Teachers have positive relationships with pupils, and are skilled at maintaining a good pace to lessons, using a range of teaching techniques, keeping pupils actively engaged and on task.
- The science teachers are well qualified and demonstrate good skills such as effective questioning, good classroom management, high quality communication, good use of computer technology and they show very good response to pupils' needs.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum offered in science meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- There is a clear drive to ensure that scientific investigation is integrated into the planning for teaching and learning. This is helping pupils to engage and learn effectively and is contributing to high standards.
- The school has chosen new GCSE science courses to provide for pupils which will allow an enhanced range of teaching methods and learning experiences for pupils matched to their needs and learning styles.

Leadership and Management

Leadership and management in science are good.

- The head of department is providing good support and guidance to the team of science teachers. Effective communication and strong organisational skills have helped forge a team of well co-ordinated and consistently good teachers.
- The focus on teaching and learning is providing a positive drive for further improvement. The rational development planning is usefully identifying such important areas as self-evaluation, assessment for learning and independent learning.

Inclusion

Provision for inclusion is outstanding.

- Strategies for differentiation are effective and are made explicit in planning.
- The performance data show that no group is showing poorer progress than others. In class also there is good evidence of all groups making good progress.
- Teachers show great sensitivity to the needs of individuals and are ensuring that pupils have every opportunity to thrive and to learn effectively.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continuing with the planned review of the Key Stage 3 scheme of work to ensure the good range of teaching and learning experiences and science investigation is well integrated into the work planned for pupils
- bringing about further professional development and of teaching and learning through consistent monitoring and peer observation of lessons.

Design and Technology

The overall effectiveness of design and technology (D&T) was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and Standards

- Achievement and standards in D&T are excellent. Compared with pupils' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7, test and examination results in Year 9, Year 11 and the sixth form show that pupils make excellent progress. They reach very high standards compared with those attained nationally.
- Students' work is of the highest order in creative designing, the technical quality of making and the rigour of product evaluation.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in D&T is outstanding.

- Teaching is meticulously planned, delivered with great subject expertise and enthusiasm, most encouraging to students and highly individualised in order to ensure that all learn very effectively.
- Teachers have worked exceptionally well to develop a wide range of teaching methods, especially so for the complex area of stimulating pupils to design creatively.

- Assessment is very thorough and accurate. It is highly effective in showing pupils how well they are learning and how they might need to improve aspects of their work.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The curriculum is based on a broad range of very well structured design and make tasks. The knowledge pupils need to carry these out well is taught rigorously. The scheme of work is a very effective guide to teachers.
- Although systems and control are introduced in Year 7 to Year 9, the department does not offer this “hi tec” aspect of D&T in its external examination provision.

Leadership and management

The subject is outstandingly well led and managed.

- Self evaluation is rigorous, evidence based and very carefully used to identify and deal with areas for improvement.
- The D&T team work together cohesively and, collectively, have translated their deep insight into the subject into highly effective courses and teaching.
- The school provides excellent support for D&T to operate effectively.

Inclusion

The subject's contribution to the inclusion of pupils is outstanding.

- All pupils, from a wide range of ability, ethnic heritage and family economic circumstances are given excellent tuition and guidance. This underlies the very high levels of achievement in D&T at Camden School for Girls.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to review the coverage within D&T of systems and control
- in the light of Ofsted's report “Food Technology in Secondary Schools – HMI 2633”, to review the extent to which Food Technology examination courses contribute to pupils' life skills in cooking, nutrition and healthy eating as well as to the aims of D&T education
- to continue the excellent work so far carried out further to develop teaching methods which stimulate rigorous and creative designing.

Yours sincerely

Ian Richardson
Her Majesty's Inspector