

02 November 2006

Mr A. Griffiths
The Headteacher
The Ellowes Hall School
Stickley Lane
Lower Gornal
Dudley
West Midlands
DY3 2JH

Dear Mr Griffiths

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 1 -2 November 2006 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. 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 six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T was judged to be good with some outstanding features. It is an improving department.

Achievement and standards

Standards on entry are in line with national expectations. Progress across the key stages is good.

- Standards achieved in D&T are good. However, boys do not achieve as well as girls.
- The school works hard to close the gap and boys' performance improved significantly last year.

Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

Teaching is good overall with some which is outstanding.

- Pupils are able to work with a high degree of independence because clear targets are set and shared with them.
- Most pupils understand how to improve their work, but some pupils are unclear what they need to do next.
- Effective monitoring of pupils enables teachers to be clear about what pupils have learnt.
- Pupils enjoy the subject and are confident in their teachers. They value being 'challenged to do better'. They appreciate the time teachers give to helping them. Pupils appreciate that they are known as individuals.
- The whole school developments that the department is leading in assessing learning have meant that all teachers now understand how to develop pupils' thinking through effective questioning. This has also helped to improve pupils' independent learning.
- Teachers have invested a great deal of their own time in producing CD ROMS which exemplify the Key Stage 4 major projects, mark schemes and lessons. Thus pupils have an excellent reference source which they can use at home to support their learning. This has raised the standard of pupils' work.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- Pupils are able to study each material area in depth. Progression has been built into schemes of work through ensuring that design capabilities are clearly identified and developed.
- Prior learning is consistently referred to and securely underpins pupils' work.
- Homework is a valued part of learning and teachers effectively use it to bridge into the next lesson. This promotes pupils' independent learning.
- D&T is compulsory at Key Stage 4; in Year 9 pupils are able to choose two D&T areas and select one of these to study in Key Stage 4. Pupils are secure in their choice because they are well prepared for what they will do in Years 10 and 11.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding.

- The department is constantly striving to improve.
- Staff respect each other and the pupils.

- Helpful structures appropriately place the emphasis on teaching and learning and using assessment to assist pupils.

Inclusion

This is good because all staff know the pupils as individuals.

- This knowledge is used to ensure all pupils have challenging targets and are helped to meet them.
- Looked after pupils, in particular, are enabled to meet their targets.
- Staff work hard to ensure that pupils' attendance is good and challenging behaviour is effectively managed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that comments on work clearly explain each pupil's next steps for improvement.

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

A copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker
Her Majesty's Inspector