

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



13 March 2007

Ms Betts
Headteacher
Connaught School for Girls
Connaught Road
Leytonstone
London
E11 4AB

Dear Ms Betts

Ofsted survey inspection programme – English and business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit with David Butler HMI on 06 – 07 March 2007 to inspect work in English and business education.

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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, review of students' work, observation of the Year 7 public speaking competition and parts of eight lessons.

The school presented a calm and orderly atmosphere where learning was valued and where individuals, adult and student, were shown respect and treated with dignity.

English

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subjects the visit had a particular focus on the current English survey theme: provision for poetry.

Achievement and standards in English

Achievement and standards in English are outstanding.

- Results in national tests at both key stages are consistently well above national and local authority figures. The 2005 results placed the school in the top 4 % nationally at Key Stage 3 and in the top 8% at Key Stage 4.
- Contextual Value Added scores (CVA) for English are significantly better at Key Stages 3 and 4 than in schools nationally.
- Residuals data for 2006 show that the majority of students attained higher results in English and English Literature at GCSE than in other subjects.
- Class and course work is of a consistently high standard in all year groups. Girls of all abilities make excellent progress in lessons as a result of teachers' high expectations and robust assessment and monitoring.
- Students have very positive attitudes. They behaved well in class and around the school and were articulate and polite when talking with the inspectors.
- Their literacy skills support their learning well in other subjects.

Quality of teaching and learning in English

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Good and outstanding teaching was seen in both key stages.

- The low level of turnover in the teaching staff promotes confidence in the students and allows teachers to be adventurous and to take calculated risks in their teaching. Very productive relationships, based on mutual respect, lead to well-run classes where students enjoy their work enormously and develop effective learning strategies.
- Teachers have first-rate subject knowledge. They explain concepts clearly and all adults present students with excellent models of oral and written English.
- Assessment is exceptionally thorough and provides teachers with regular updates that are used well to guide the content of lessons.
- Marking is very effective. Students take good note of their teachers' advice. Consequently, their work shows rapid and sustained improvement and this helps them to improve their grades substantially.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- Thoroughly researched and well crafted schemes of work are flexible enough to allow for innovation and creativity by talented and experienced staff while also supporting them with very effective

teaching materials. The organisation of the units supports the early completion of coursework and this contributes to the high pass rates.

- Lessons have been lengthened allowing teachers to explore topics in greater depth than before. Students enjoy the longer teaching sessions and being taught by different teachers for each topic.
- Teaching of oracy is outstanding, resulting in the students developing exceptionally confident and articulate debating skills.
- Extra-curricular provision is commendable. Numerous lunch-time clubs, visits to theatres, public competitions and innovative study programmes plus a wide range of visitors enrich the curriculum and provide opportunities for the students to socialise and to develop and use their literacy skills in a wider setting.

Leadership and management in English

Leadership and management of English are outstanding.

- The knowledgeable head of department is enthusiastic and passionate about the subject. The department is exceptionally well organised. Documentation is exemplary as is the use of information technology to monitor, assess and report on students' progress. Data is interrogated rigorously to ensure that students are making the maximum amount of progress in each element of the English curriculum.
- Teachers are exceptionally well supported and have a clear sense of direction. Regular meetings keep staff well informed and there is excellent informal communication between members of the department.
- Team work is important and effective. However, there is no second in department increasing the heavy demands made on the head of department's time.
- The subject action plan is based on an accurate analysis of data and feedback from staff and students.
- Moderation practices promote exceptional consistency in the assessment of coursework.
- Monitoring of standards is thorough. Teachers see each cohort's books regularly and so are aware of strengths and can quickly identify any areas of weakness.
- The progress that students make, their enjoyment of English and the very high quality of subject leadership provide an excellent basis for further improvement.

Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is good.

- Poetry is taught systematically across both key stages. Provision is equally effective for all groups of students. There were examples of outstanding teaching seen.
- The wide range of poems on offer reflects the multi-cultural nature of society well.
- Older students thought that coursework constrained the amount of time they spent on writing and performing their own poetry and caused teachers to focus too much on answering exam questions when teaching poetry.
- Younger students enjoy writing in a range of poetic forms and can discuss knowledgeably the stylistic devices that poets use.
- All students enjoy the opportunities that they have to take part in school and national competitions and to hear poets read and discuss their own works.

Inclusion

Inclusion in English is excellent.

- Achievement is very good overall with all groups performing very well in relation to national expectations.
- Students of all abilities and backgrounds get on well with each other and this means that teaching and learning proceed without hindrance.
- Exceptional provision is made to help those with gaps in their skills or knowledge to catch up and to help able students to extend their studies.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- devising ways of distributing leadership and management tasks effectively.

Business and enterprise education

The visit focused on the development of economic and business understanding, including personal finance and the provision for enterprise education. The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of an assembly and parts of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of business and enterprise education was judged to be satisfactory with some good and outstanding features. There is strong capacity for further improvement.

Achievement and standards

Standards and achievement are satisfactory.

- Students have a basic understanding of business and personal finance but their understanding of how the economy operates is not sufficiently developed.
- Students are developing good skills for future employment. They are confident, articulate and present themselves very well in discussions.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards enterprise education, they are keen to take responsibility and respond enthusiastically to opportunities to show initiative and creativity.
- Year 10 students enjoyed and valued the enterprise day and are able to identify the knowledge and skills they have gained from it.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some examples of good and outstanding practice.

- Students benefit a great deal from a very well organised programme of work experience and other work-related activities in Year 11.
- The professional interview day provides all Year 10 students with an excellent opportunity to develop their skills in applying for employment.
- Some outstanding enterprise work takes place in GCSE art involving students working with a local potter.
- There is a lack of assessment of students' enterprise skills and their economic and business understanding.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory with several strengths.

- There is a very good programme of careers education and work experience.
- The Year 10 enterprise day and subjects such as geography, design and technology and art make an effective contribution to work-related learning, including enterprise education.
- A small number of students, most of whom have learning difficulties, benefit from taking the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) course.
- Year 11 students have had limited experience of taking part in enterprise activities.

Leadership and management

- Leadership and management of enterprise education and economic and business understanding are satisfactory and there is good capacity to make further improvement.
- Careers education and work experience are well managed.
- The school has recently made work-related learning, including enterprise education, a priority in the school development plan, a useful audit of current provision has been undertaken and a policy is in place.
- Staff involved in the NFTE course have received training but there has not been any professional development for all staff in enterprise education.
- There is a lack of coherence in the current provision for enterprise education and economic and business understanding and the learning outcomes students are expected to achieve by the end of Year 11 have not been fully identified.

Inclusion

Inclusion is good.

- All students have the opportunity to take part in a professional job interview, work experience and an enterprise day and there are a range of other opportunities for students with different needs to engage in enterprise activities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing greater coherence in the provision of enterprise education and economic and business understanding
- building on the examples of good practice to provide more opportunities for all students to engage in enterprise activities
- identifying and assessing the learning outcomes students are expected to achieve through enterprise education and the provision for economic and business understanding.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop English and Business and Enterprise education in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority/Local Learning Skills Council. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term and made available to the team for the next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Cathie Munt
Her Majesty's Inspector