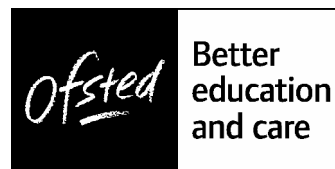


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02 March 2007

Mr G Thomas  
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Dear Mr Thomas

Ofsted survey inspection programme: Curriculum Innovation

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 01 March 2007 to look at your school's curriculum and how innovation contributes to standards and achievement.

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 are 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 and visits to some lessons, seeing the school at work.

The overall effectiveness of the curriculum in terms of its organisation into a three period day is judged to be outstanding.

#### Achievement and standards

- Achievement and standards are outstanding. Progress is very good because pupils are given time in lessons to reflect on their learning and to revisit aspects they are unsure about or which need developing further. Pupils' learning skills, such as their ability to listen and speak, organise themselves and work in groups are all excellent and supported by the three – lesson day format.
- Pupils have ready access throughout the day to computers, yet in Key Stage 4 their knowledge, skills and understanding are not as good as they could be.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They learn over the succession of 90 minute lessons to be independent, work in pairs, groups and as part of the whole class. They take on different roles such as

narrator or scribe with ease, negotiating with their peers the best way to accomplish a task. They make informed choices about how to complete the work in the extended time available. Pupils enjoy the three period day as it gives them time to think and reflect in each lesson. Overall there is a sense of calmness prevailing throughout the school, including at lesson - change time. Pupils' behaviour and response to each other and to adults is outstanding, as is the atmosphere in rooms and corridors during breaks and at lunch time.

### Quality of teaching and the curriculum

- The quality of teaching is good with teachers using a range of strategies within the 90 minute lesson. They work as teams so that pupils feel they can seek advice from any subject specialist and not just their class teacher. The availability of the shared areas is excellent and supports learning well.
- The structure yet simplicity of the timetable fully meets the aims of the school. It impacts positively on pupils, teachers and managers. For pupils it provides opportunities for extended tasks over lessons that are scheduled to provide balance between subjects over a fortnight. The mixed ability grouping works very well and impacts on high standards for all. Progression from Key Stage 2 is straightforward as many pupils entering in Year 7 are used to the three period format in their primary school.
- The impact of the curriculum model on teachers is very positive. For example, it provides blocked time so that subjects can interpret the teaching groups in ways they think works best. It provides for department planning and discussion time. The allocation of subject work areas and a maximum 0.8 teaching programme supports the teachers well.
- Information and Communications Technology (ICT) remains an issue in Key Stage 4 as it is blocked as a choice against languages. This results in many pupils not having a structured programme of ICT after year 9.

### Leadership and management of the curriculum

- The curriculum innovation has been led expertly and enthusiastically by you over many years. Staff have been empowered by the three lesson model; they have the freedom to decide on its implementation in their subject. This results in the school having a very reflective set of teachers who are continually thinking about their teaching and how the curriculum is to be taught and learnt. The English area, for example, has taken the design of the new build and the philosophies of the curriculum into full account in their teaching and the work observed in that area during my visit was excellent.
- Management uses data extremely well to assess and monitor pupils' progress and set targets.

## Inclusion

- This is a very inclusive school. All groups of pupils enjoy and achieve well in mixed ability groups. The curriculum allows pupils with gifts and talents to be extended yet also suits the needs of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Areas for development, which we discussed:

- To raise standards in ICT in Key Stage 4 by:
  - providing leadership of it as a subject in its own right
  - mapping the ICT programme of study in order to agree a programme across all subjects that addresses the teaching of ICT concepts as well as opportunities for pupils to apply those concepts.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the curriculum in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, 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

John Williams  
Her Majesty's Inspector