

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



22 May 2007

Mrs Tiffen
Headteacher
Beaudesert Lower School
Appenine Way
Leighton Buzzard
Bedfordshire
LU7 3DX

Dear Mrs Tiffen

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 21 May 2007 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 three lessons.

Design and Technology

The overall effectiveness of design and technology was judged to be good and improving.

Achievement and standards

Pupils enter the school with standards in D&T which are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the subject.

- Pupils' literacy levels when they enter school are low. Pupils are encouraged to express their thoughts and plan their making. Consequently all pupils can accurately explain their ideas. Work is carefully matched to pupils' needs so pupils make satisfactory progress. By the end of Year 4 their overall attainment is in line with national expectations.

- Effective and carefully planned differentiation ensures that a wide range of strategies are used to support and challenge all pupils. Pupils are encouraged to identify where they need extra help and this promotes independent learning.
- Higher attaining pupils make good progress because of the high expectations of the teachers and the challenging work which is set.
- Designing is taught systematically and staff ensure that pupils use D&T language with confidence and accuracy. Pupils' work is neat and attractively presented. Pupils understand the importance of accuracy in measuring and making and can explain how they made their work and how they would change it next time. However, specifications are not used and thus evaluations tend to be superficial. With older pupils in particular evaluations do not capture the richness of their thoughts. This limits the opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking.

Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

The quality of teaching and learning in design and technology is good.

- Pupils enjoy D&T. One boy summed this up by 'it couldn't get any better'. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to be creative and to make their own ideas. They are rightly proud of their work. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together effectively supporting pupils in developing their own solutions to problems.
- Pupils' understanding of designing is promoted through the use of sketches and prototypes. Teachers help pupils over hurdles they face when designing and this ensure that all pupils make a good quality final product. Teaching assistants are used well to support small groups of pupils; this ensures that the wide ranges of abilities are catered for well in the mixed ability teaching groups.
- Teachers used questioning effectively to extend pupils' thinking. Pupils were asked how they had solved problems in their designing work and answers were shared with the whole class to help all pupils move forward. Pupils recalled work carried out in previous terms and this information was built upon in the new unit of work. Thus teachers were clear about pupils' starting points and helped them consolidate and extend learning in the new tasks. The opportunity provided by 'Eco week' was used effectively to provide real design problems which pupils needed to solve ready for the work they were going to do at the 'Eco Park'. Pupils were enthusiastic about the work they were doing and relished the opportunity of testing their ideas out on their visit.
- Pupils worked collaboratively and in pairs with a high degree of maturity and cooperation. Lessons seen were characterised by pupils listening to each others' views and taking turns. Everyone's contribution was valued.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in design and technology is good and improving.

- The curriculum for D&T is broad and balanced. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work are used satisfactorily and teachers are growing in confidence in developing them to meet the school's particular needs. The creative use of whole weeks where the timetable is collapsed has allowed teachers to plan imaginatively and extend the learning opportunities for pupils. Good cross curricular links in these weeks provide a stimulating challenge which the pupils thoroughly enjoy.
- D&T time is appropriately extended and making capabilities are embedded in a broad range of cross curricular work. This helps pupils practise their skills and has enabled them to use small hand tools with accuracy and care.
- The whole school D&T day provides a concentrated time for pupils to complete a making activity. The preparation beforehand ensures that the time is effectively used for completing the pupils' designs. The Great Egg race with teams of parents and their children demonstrates to parents the value and fun of working together with their children to solve a problem.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of design and technology are good and improving.

- The subject coordinator has an enthusiasm and vision for D&T which is infectious. She effectively monitors teaching in D&T and identifies appropriate areas for development. She ensures that accurate records are kept of every pupil's progress. This information is used well to identify amendments needed in planning.
- Your commitment to increasing creativity in the curriculum has benefited the development of D&T. This is helping to make learning fun. The value you place on each person's contribution to the school has given teachers the confidence to be imaginative in their planning and teaching.

Inclusion

- There is no difference in the overall achievement of boys and girls. Those pupils with learning disabilities and or difficulties make satisfactory progress. This is because of the wide range of differentiation used to support and challenge all pupils. Teachers recognise that although literacy and numeracy levels may be low pupils can still succeed in D&T if appropriate support is in place. Talking and paired work is used well to help pupils work together on solving

problems. Carefully targeted interventions ensure that pupils are encouraged to be independent learners. Appropriate support ensures that all pupils complete work to their highest standard.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- use specifications when designing to help pupils design more purposefully and challenge pupils further when making evaluations.

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