

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



21 March 2008

Mr S Common
Headteacher
Sir John Leman School and
Technology College
Ringsfield Road
Beccles
Suffolk
NR34 9PG

Dear Mr Common

Ofsted 2007-08 subject survey inspection programme: Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17-18 March to look at work in Design and Technology (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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of seven lessons.

Design and Technology

The overall effectiveness of D&T was judged to be good because of the rapid progress it is making in its improvement.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in D&T are satisfactory overall.

- Students enter the school in Year 9 with attainment in the core subjects that is below national average. Students often remember only having a limited experience of studying D&T in Years 7 and 8. At the end of Key Stage 3, students' attainment is broadly in line with the national average. Students make good progress in Year 9. Students are able to study and produce a good range of

food products, but not textiles, a national recommendation.

- As a Technology College there is a requirement that all students follow a technological course to GCSE. Out of 328 students, 272 of the students were entered for the D&T full course examination in 2007 and a further 14 followed a short course in food studies. The school met its stated aim for a specialist school, namely in enabling all students to follow a course in D&T at Key Stage 4. The percentage number of students entered gaining an award is similar to most schools but significantly more students are entered here than average.
- Students' average point score is just below national figure, as is the number of students gaining A* to C grades, which is good in comparison with the below average attainment on entry to the school.
- Boys and do girls similarly well. However, when compared with national results, where girls do better than boys, in this school, girls do significantly worse than girls nationally, and boys' results are above average.
- Attainment overall in D&T is below that in other subjects. When compared with their attainment at the end of Year 9, students' mostly make satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress.
- Students follow their GCSE course in D&T in a range of materials. Results vary from subject to subject. Girls do not do as well in Graphic Products as they do in their other subjects and boys' performance is lower in Resistant Materials. In the Food groups, boys attain well and girls' results are average.
- In the sixth form, the D&T: Product Design course is studied to AS level. In the examination, 16 candidates were entered with two gaining A grades, two a C grade, but four were not awarded a grade. The rest gained D and E grades. When some students re-sat some of their modules this year, the results improved. At A level, nine students entered and all gained a grade with one student gaining an A grade, another a B grade and three gaining a C grade. Results then were in line with predictions.
- In lessons, standards are rising. Students now are working at least at a satisfactory level of achievement, and for many it is higher. No attainment seen was judged to be unsatisfactory

Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good overall.

- The standard of teaching is variable with some that is satisfactory, much that is good, and some that is outstanding.
- Almost all lessons start precisely on time with well-prepared starters that immediately engage students. Students know what the objectives of the lesson are and what their teachers expect of them. In the very best of lessons, target times are given for the completion of each section, and then a new task is introduced that builds well onto the one prior.
- In practical lessons, which focus on making work of quality, the theoretical underpinning of the processes being used, as well as the properties of the materials used, are included. This makes theory appropriate to making, and builds up a higher level of understanding. Progress then is very good. In the more average lessons there is too much attention to developing practical skills and too little to developing an understanding of the theoretical principles.

- Homework is set regularly.
- Demanding teaching enables students to do well. An excellent lesson was seen where the accommodation was used to its maximum with the workshop and writing area used throughout the lesson as students moved from making to evaluating their work seamlessly. Here students made outstanding progress
- Relationships are good and students and teachers work well together and keep on task to the end of the lesson. In Year 9, some boys demand too much attention from their teachers, calling out and answering questions that were directed at others. Here girls were given too little opportunity to answer, and although the lesson proceeded without disruption, learning opportunities were unequal.
- Sixth form students take more responsibility for their own learning. Teachers act as consultants, allowing students to make their own decisions and take responsibility for their mistakes. Teachers develop students' ability to receive criticism of their work and they give feedback in a most constructive manner.
- Teachers are working hard as a team to refine and develop the curriculum to make it up-to-date and relevant to the needs of the students. Projects are being removed and new ones added, whilst others are being altered to improve the range of learning opportunities offered.
- Students look forward to coming to D&T, and their impression of the department is improving in line with its success. No poor behaviour was seen although students referred to some lessons where their learning was being impeded. In the lessons seen behaviour was good and there were clear procedures for dealing with any matter of indiscipline. This helped keep up the pace of learning
- ICT is often effectively used well in class work. Plans are in train to include it more systematically into all lessons.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is very good with some excellent features.

- In Year 9, students are provided with a course that systematically covers the production of products in resistant materials, (wood, plastics and metal), food and graphic products. Although there is an agreed structure across middle schools, staff in the upper school are not clear how fully students in the middle schools cover all the parts of the National Curriculum as required.
- At Key Stage 4, the choice of GCSE courses is from Resistant Materials, Food Studies and Graphic Products.
- The school has developed vocational courses in partnership with other local schools and the local college. In response to the introduction of the Diploma programme, this partnership has created a new two million pound Skills Centre. Here courses in Catering, Construction, Hairdressing and Motor Vehicle take place. The students who started this year were fulsome in their praise. They called their courses 'life changing' and thought that they were treated like adults, which they recognise has helped them improve their attitudes and behaviour. They look forward to going, and for them it is the high point of their week.
- In the sixth form, students can choose the newly introduced courses at AS level and A2 level in Product Design.
- Students at all levels speak well of their experiences.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management by the head teacher are outstanding, and management within the department is very good.

- D&T has been a weakness in the school's provision for several years. When the new head teacher took over he rightly made its improvement a priority within the school's development plan. He committed time and energy in appointing key managers and providing them with resources to update the work of the department. The wise appointment of a new curriculum leader, who has brought both rigour and a sense of vision of what D&T should be like, started the improvement. There is now very strong leadership in the department with effective plans to improve teaching and learning, and hence, standards. Staff in the department now work together well. The department has rapidly improved. The school is a vibrant place, and so is the D&T, with wonderful posters celebrating students' achievements both within the curriculum and outside, and large screens with active displays that show a changing series of images of the fullness of school life.
- Modern and appropriate resources for teaching and learning have been provided, including a new laser cutter that has found favour with students and has added a new dimension to their work. ICT is well used and developed through the school's specialist school focus. The resources for computer aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) are better and improving.
- Two problems have been experienced in D&T. Firstly, the recruitment of staff for food technology was difficult. By clever advertising in Northern Ireland and the professional development of a new eager teacher, this has been resolved. Secondly, the large physical distance between the two areas of D&T reduces the effectiveness of management and makes cohesion more difficult to achieve. There are planned developments with minor alterations to the teaching areas and for the siting of computers, which are well considered and provide further sound strategies for development.

Inclusion

- The school, and in particular the headteacher, sees that social cohesion is achieved through the development of a curriculum that matches students' individual needs and interests. To this end, the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been widened this year to include vocational courses in catering, engineering, construction and automobile engineering and the introduction of the new Diploma structure is planned for next year. Together, these form a basis for an individualised curriculum for each student. They combine with the very strong pastoral system, to help the school become truly inclusive.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- significantly raising girls' achievement at GCSE examination level, particularly in Graphic Products, by ensuring that the work given fully matches their interests,

needs and aspirations so that they are encouraged to produce coursework of the highest quality

- improve the challenge, pace and rigour of teaching and learning consistently across the department
- manage more effectively boys' behaviour where it falls below the good levels existing in most lessons.

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

Andrew Lyons
Additional Inspector