

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr S Hawke
Headteacher
Deansfield High School
Deans Road
Wolverhampton
WV1 2BH

Dear Mr Hawke

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 18-19 February 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards overall are above average.

- Students join the school with standards which are well below average but by the end of Key Stage 4 their standards across the range of design courses are above average.
- Although standards at Key Stage 3 are below average, a significant minority of students achieved Level 7 and 26 Year 9 students were successfully entered for GCSE DT: Resistant Materials in 2007.
- GCSE results in 2007 were above average in courses that focussed on Textiles and Graphics and below average in Resistant Materials. One group of Year 11 students are the first cohort to complete the building construction course this year and are on target to achieve well. Evidence shows that these courses are well suited to the students of Deansfield.
- Sixth form students are able to study fashion and textiles design through the Art & Design courses on offer at AS/A2 level and some stunning examples of coursework were seen.

- Students enjoy their time in the design faculty where there are numerous opportunities to work in design teams. This builds their confidence in oral communication and they learn to appreciate the views of others from different cultures, religions and times.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in D&T is good.

- Teaching and learning are good mainly because of the effective working relationships built between teacher and learner. Teachers know their students well as individuals and are therefore able to tailor teaching methods to suit. Good teaching is characterised by excellent subject knowledge and an infectious enthusiasm. There is a large number of learning support assistants and mentors who work well with students and have a positive impact on their achievement. Teachers are willing to become involved in competitions such as Toyota Challenge 2008 and the First Lego League International which adds considerable enjoyment to students' time at school.
- Marking is accurate and teachers give students good guidance on how to improve their work, for example, the comprehensive feedback given to students following the building construction course.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- A progressive approach to curriculum design has been adopted where generic designing skills are taught both in D&T and art & design. A wide range of communication skills is embedded in schemes of work and, together with the flexible integration of National Curriculum programmes of study in both subjects, this provides students with a rich experience of designing and making.
- This flexibility continues in Key Stage 4 so that students can achieve their potential in an aspect of design which best suites their aptitude. There is a good range of vocational pathways, for example, the BTEC construction course taught at the Timken Vocational Training Centre that is open to all students. Further courses in plumbing and motor vehicle engineering are planned.
- Large blocks of time are allocated to the design department enabling whole days to be utilised for vocational courses and students prefer this way of working. Teachers are willing to provide students with extra curricular support according to need and a recent two day workshop in the half term break was well attended.
- Computer aided design and manufacture is effectively integrated into schemes of work at Key Stage 3 and becomes one of the tools of choice for students at Key Stage 4.
- A rolling programme of refurbishment has improved accommodation which is now light, spacious and conducive to good designing.
- The design department is proactive in teacher training with a number of successes through the Graduate Teacher Programme and supporting trainees following post graduate courses.

- Creative Partnerships, the Government's flagship creative learning programme, has been successfully established for some years at the school. Projects such as fashion shows and work with local community partners like Bromford Housing give students the opportunity to work on live design briefs with experienced creative practitioners. This curriculum enrichment provides students with unique learning opportunities which are shared with other schools, both locally and nationally.

Leadership and management of subject

Leadership and management of D&T are good.

- Creative, dynamic subject leadership and a focus on sharing professional expertise are hallmarks of the design faculty.
- The Raising Achievement Plan supported by the Departmental Review clearly set out action plans for improvement based on firm evidence. These plans are systematically implemented.
- The quality of teaching is monitored regularly and informs professional development needs.
- A strong emphasis on continuing professional development ensures that teachers stay up to date with developments. This is enhanced through the schools' involvement with Creative Partnerships.
- The views of learners are taken into consideration when reviewing learning, teaching and curriculum development.

Inclusion

The inclusive curriculum provides equality of access and opportunity for all students with a significant majority achieving their personal best within the design faculty. The centre for hearing impairment ensures that all students based at the centre are accompanied by an adult who provides them with highly skilled signing support in their lessons both on and off site. Designing in stimulating contexts has improved the performance of boys and they currently out perform the girls. The focus on a 'can do' ethos has encouraged girls to become fully involved in the vocational construction course and in common with the boys they are on track to achieve well. All students entered for examinations in Year 11 achieve a grade with only small numbers not entered due to insufficient coursework because of absence.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- investigating Key Stage 4 and sixth form courses in Product Design to maintain continuity in the 14-19 age range
- extending provision at the Timken Vocational Training Centre.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop D&T 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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Michael Stanton
Additional Inspector