

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr A Hutchinson
Parkside Federation
Parkside
Cambridge
CB1 1EH

Dear Mr Hutchinson

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in English and media

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit to look at work in English and media on 27 February.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: discussions with staff and students; review of students' work; scrutiny of subject documentation and observation of seven part lessons.

Features of good practice observed

- There is a longstanding commitment to the teaching of media in English and across the school.
- The curriculum in English is very well balanced with the teaching of media, the moving image and information and communication technology (ICT) very well integrated and mapped effectively to ensure continuity and progression of skills and understanding. Teachers often use media or moving image approaches in other units of work, such as the study of plays by Shakespeare or World War I poetry.
- There is a very broad range of units focused on up-to-date media and ICT applications which require students to use and apply their skills and understanding through using media equipment and software. Curriculum days are used well to provide students with intensive experience of producing media and ICT work, for example trailers for a film in Year 10.
- The curriculum is constantly under review and schemes of work are adjusted to ensure that teaching keeps pace with developments in society and the media industry.

- There are successful initiatives which provide students with a choice of courses, such as the Year 9 media project involving five options, all leading to practical outcomes of a high standard.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge in media, ICT and the moving image and are encouraged to develop specific schemes of work and become expert in particular aspects of these areas, benefiting from effective school-based training.
- Teachers' planning is very thorough and includes four levels of intended outcomes to match the mixed ability nature of classes. Lesson plans require students to be active in their learning.
- Students enjoy their work and show a good level of media and film literacy. They are aware of how they can transfer skills such as analysis between different texts and media. They are expected to assess their progress using criteria specifically developed for media based work.
- There are innovative projects which provide opportunities for students throughout their education. Pupils in primary schools study media through animated film. From September 2008, Year 9 students will follow a media based course having completed Key Stage 3 tests at the end of Year 8. All Key Stage 4 students take Media Studies GCSE in addition to English and English Literature. The Creative and Media Diploma course will commence in September 2008.
- The approach to teaching media and ICT encourages students to take responsibility for their learning and to show that they can work well collaboratively and independently. This is demonstrated in the high quality of work produced by Year 9 in film, computer games and designing TV and magazine advertisements.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that students are consistently aware of the differentiated outcomes contained in teachers' planning for lessons.

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

As I explained previously, 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

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector