

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



26 September 2008

Mr C Smith
Headteacher
Hardenhuish School
Hardenhuish Lane
Chippenham
Wiltshire
SN14 6RJ

Dear Mr Smith

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Planning for change: the impact of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 September 2008 to look at work in planning for and implementing the new Key Stage 3 curriculum with particular reference to Year 7.

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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the planning for and implementation of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards on entry to the present Year 7 were above average. At this early stage of the implementation of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum, it is not possible to make a firm judgement on its impact on achievement. However, the progress of the students observed in lessons was good.

- Students reported that the pace of learning in Year 7 is faster and more challenging than in their previous schooling.
- They enjoy their education at the school, behave well and have very good attitudes to learning.
- They are enthusiastic about the many opportunities to join clubs and societies in the school in which they participate keenly.

- Students are clear about the connections between different aspects of their learning and value the provision for personal development as much as for academic study. This is underpinned by excellent curricular planning for personal and economic well-being, and developing financial capability.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in Year 7 is good.

- Learning objectives and outcomes are clear, shared well with the students and referred to throughout the lessons.
- Lessons are well planned and build on students' previous learning.
- The subject knowledge of teachers is good.
- Students who require extra help are well supported in lessons by teachers and teaching assistants.
- There is a good focus on using appropriate vocabulary and subject terminology in lessons.
- Classroom routines have been quickly established at the start of Year 7 so that students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and to which they respond positively.
- Classrooms are well managed so that resources are used to best effect.
- In some lessons, a variety of whole-class, paired and group work is used well to provide variety and sustain interest. However, this is not consistent and in some lessons whole-class teaching predominates when other strategies would be beneficial.
- Questioning probes and extends students' understanding and creates an inclusive atmosphere in which students feel able to contribute. However, the range of questioning techniques does not consistently ensure that all students are involved in their learning.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the new curriculum in Year 7 is good.

- The new curriculum is carefully and sensibly structured, retaining the rigour of traditional subject disciplines while planning for greater flexibility and the development of a wider range of skills across subjects.
- The non-statutory dimensions of the new National Curriculum are being planned for, using special events and themes across and within subjects. This work is linked to the requirements for functional skills and personal, learning and thinking skills. Planning is at an early stage, but the involvement, enthusiasm and expertise of the wide range of staff involved have ensured that a good start has been made.
- Students report that they enjoy their learning. They can make connections between subjects and have an understanding of how skills in one subject can be utilised elsewhere.
- The previous curriculum ensured that choices and opportunities were tailored to the needs and aspirations of the students. This has been taken further by tailoring provision more closely to the attainment of the students at Key Stage 2.

- Students report that the curriculum is enriched by a wide range of interesting clubs and activities.
- Subjects are at different stages of development in terms of planning schemes of work to meet the new requirements.

Leadership and management of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum

The quality of the leadership and management of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum is outstanding.

- The introduction of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum has been expertly handled by senior leaders in the school.
- Planning started at an early stage and was based on a thorough analysis of existing provision and the opportunities presented by the new arrangements.
- Staff meetings, briefing papers, training events and regular updates have ensured that staff have been regularly consulted and involved in planning and implementation.
- Strategic planning for the new curriculum is rigorous and clear with monitoring and evaluation procedures clearly defined.
- Senior leaders have made excellent use of nationally and locally provided training opportunities for themselves and for middle leaders.
- Middle leaders reported that they appreciated the training events provided at national, local and school level which enabled them to understand the changes and their implications clearly. They have been fully involved in implementing the changes.

Inclusion

The impact of the curriculum on inclusion is good.

- Very good provision ensures that students of all abilities make good progress in their learning.
- Support for students is based on careful diagnostic assessment resulting in good provision for individual needs.
- Support for students within mainstream lessons and withdrawal when necessary is well planned.
- The curriculum is well designed so that it is accessible to all students regardless of ability or background.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing strategies to share the best practice in teaching and learning between departments across the school
- ensuring that the quality and the rate of change in planning for the new requirements of the new National Curriculum are consistent across subjects.

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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Harrett
Her Majesty's Inspector