

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



20 November 2008

Mr R Hall
Headteacher
Blessed Robert Johnson Catholic College
Whitechurch Road
Wellington
Telford, Shropshire
TF1 3DY

Dear Mr Hall

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 10-11 November 2008 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 departmental documentation, analysis of students' work and the observation of four lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards overall are satisfactory.

- Students enter the school with standards in line with national expectation. Overall attainment in D&T at GCSE has improved from 34.1% in 2007 to 47.2% (un-validated data) in 2008. The number of A-A* grades gained in D&T was better than the school's average. However, whilst girls' average attainment has consistently been better than boys', in D&T boys attained above the school's average for boys at A-A* grades.
- Students with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) make similar progress to other students. This is because staff know their students well and ensure that work is carefully matched to students' needs.

Gifted and talented students would benefit from greater challenge in lessons particularly through the use of computer aided design and computer aided manufacturer (CAD/CAM).

- There is improved management and consistency in meeting course work deadlines for examination work. This is promoting higher standards of work.

Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and have strived to make projects more interesting to both male and female students. But students still choose subjects in D&T along traditional gender lines.
- Teachers effectively manage large group sizes well, in rooms which are very cramped for practical work.
- Lesson starters link well to the learning objectives and help students settle quickly to work. In most lessons there is good pace to learning and students are effectively challenged by the work. There are too few opportunities for students to participate in lesson discussion and this limits students in developing their own understanding of the work. Students say they enjoy D&T and are rightly proud of what they make. They appreciate the help and support given them by staff and especially the catch up sessions which take place outside of lesson time. Relationships between staff and students are good, and mutually respectful.
- Assessment is being developed. Most students know what their targets are but they are not always clear about what they need to do to improve. Assessment practice is not yet systematic across all subjects in D&T.

Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum meets requirements. Modifications have begun to be implemented to meet the new Key Stage 3 National Curriculum requirements for Year 7. Students' previous learning is used well in lessons. Links across subject areas have begun to be made in aspects of designing and making, but they are still at an early stage of development. Students understand more clearly what constitutes D&T thus improving their designing capabilities.
- Opportunities are now being developed to enhance the options at Key Stage 4 and Post-16 through new diplomas courses.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory.

- You and the senior leadership team are supportive of D&T and have an accurate picture of the department's strengths and weaknesses. This is used effectively to promote developments in D&T.
- The recently appointed head of department has great drive and determination. He models good practice in both leadership and teaching. The department's self-evaluation is accurate. This underpins the clear agenda for improvement which he is implementing. He has shared his vision effectively and the department now has an improved 'corporate' feel to it.

The extent to which inequality and stereotyping are tackled in D&T

- The department has reviewed all its projects to identify whether they have a male or female bias. As a result some projects have already been changed. The department continually monitors numbers to evaluate how successful they are in attracting more girls to resistant materials and more boys to textiles. This has had mixed success so far.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that assessment is systemically used across the department to inform teaching and enable greater independent learning for students
- increase the challenge for higher attaining students by developing CAD/CAM and nutritional modelling
- increase opportunities for students to talk about their learning in order to develop their understanding.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop D&T in the school.

As explained in the previous letter, 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