

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



1 April 2009

Mr J Dawkins
Headteacher
The Windsor Boys School
1 Maidenhead Road
Windsor
Berkshire
SL4 5EH

Dear Mr Dawkins

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 31 March and 1 April 2009 to look at work in science.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of science, the visit had a particular focus on transition within and between phases, the range of learning experiences provided; the status and use of scientific enquiry and how science works.

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 you and the science subject leader, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of ten lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good with some outstanding features.

Achievement and standards

Standards overall are above the national average. Achievement is good.

- While there have been year-on-year variations in standards in the three science subjects the standards overall are high. In 2007 chemistry was the highest performing subject at GCSE, while in 2008 this honour went to biology.
- In 2008, while performance of students at A level in chemistry and physics was in line with expectations against GCSE performance, students taking biology performed better.

- Pupils demonstrated high standards of knowledge, understanding and skills in lessons and were seen to be making good progress. A scrutiny of their work showed the same high standards.
- Students have a mature approach to their work and high levels of application were seen in most lessons.
- Behaviour was excellent in lessons and around the science department. Conversations with students gave evidence that their personal development is good.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

Teaching and learning are good with much that is outstanding.

- The large majority of lessons seen were at least good and a significant proportion was outstanding.
- The best teaching was associated with enthusiastic, accurate and engaging presentation of a good range of activities in which students were expected to be active participants.
- The science team is made up of well qualified teachers whose work is appreciated by students. All groups of students interviewed described teaching as good or better and the majority thought teaching to be outstanding.
- Pupils are very positive about the range of activities provided, their enjoyment of practical work, the enthusiasm of their teachers and their willingness to help students at any time.
- In the main, teachers are deploying a good range of assessment techniques that promote learning: traffic light flash cards; mini-white boards; formative written comment. All these techniques are valued by students and they describe the guidance they receive on performance as good or better.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum provided is good.

- The recent changes to the curriculum provision in science have yet to fully impact on standards. The changes, such as the applied science course, are having a positive impact on the attainment of students.
- The direction of travel that characterises the current and proposed changes to the science curriculum is outstanding. The planning is leading to a flexible programme of science education that will provide a range of pathways to meet all needs.
- Performance data have been analysed thoroughly to identify successes and areas for development. Evaluation of needs has led to the proposed introduction of a post-16 vocational science course and the International Baccalaureate in 2010.
- The science curriculum is broadly based and balanced. Much of the work draws on relevant science which, through good teaching, is engaging the students well.
- The enrichment activities are promoting science effectively e.g. science week and the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) club.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good overall.

- Each of the three subjects, biology, chemistry and physics, have a subject manager and one has oversight of all the sciences.
- The day-to-day running of the faculty is effective as a consequence of the good management.
- Much of the practice is coherent across the subjects but there are differences, such as in the detail of planning.
- The faculty adheres to school policies and the senior leadership team provides a robust framework for developing a range of areas, not least the improvement of teaching and learning.
- The systems for assessing students' attainment and tracking their progress are clear and available to all teachers. This has the potential to help the identification of successes and any underperformance.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- making more consistent use of assessment and performance data in the evaluation of teaching and to inform planning better
- sharing good practice to raise all the teaching to the good standards seen overall.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop science 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

Ian Richardson
Her Majesty's Inspector