

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 Birchall
Headteacher
Byrchall High School
Warrington Road
Ashton-in-Makerfield
Wigan
WN4 9PQ

Dear Mr Birchall

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 26-27 February 2009 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 satisfactory with good features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards overall are satisfactory.

- Students enter the school with attainment at or slightly above average. By the end of Key Stage 3 they make satisfactory progress and reach standards broadly in line with expectations for their age. Few students choose to continue their study of D&T during Years 10-11.
- Standards at Key Stage 4 are broadly in line with average, although there is considerable variation across courses. Most Year 11 students achieved well in D&T in 2008 and reached their targets.
- Students' personal development is satisfactory. Students understand and know how to be safe in workshops and food rooms. Most enjoy D&T and

are proud of their design ideas and the new skills they are acquiring in using complex computer programmes to design and manufacture products. Students are not yet developing the skills necessary to work independently and in discussions they say they are not confident in applying the food skills they are learning in school to be able to cook meals for themselves.

Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory.

- Teachers make very good use of their specialist knowledge of materials and processes to ensure students receive a thorough grounding in health and safety. Teachers have good computer skills and use them well to develop resource materials and to present and clarify tasks for students. Demonstrations and focussed activities at the start of lessons are well planned to engage students' interest.
- Accommodation and resources are good; the recent acquisition of computer aided design and manufacturing equipment is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of students work.
- In the best lessons students are challenged to develop their ideas and most strive to adapt and put their own creative stamp on products. Good quality displays of visually interesting images and design work from other students positively influences them to design data storage pens.
- In some lessons work is not adapted sufficiently to meet individual learners' needs. Students spend too much time listening or writing and project work in some folders at Key Stage 3 is unfinished or shows duplication. Consequently some students do not make as much progress as they could.
- A new approach to assessment is at early stages and further tweaks are needed to iron out inconsistencies and the over use of levelling individual pieces of work.

Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school has responded well to changes in the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. Students see greater relevance in the newly introduced projects and say they are helping to modernise D&T. The school are aware of the need to further develop schemes of work and some projects in light of changes the school are introducing to the organisation of Key Stage 3.
- Key Stage 4 courses meet most students' expectations and they receive good support, advice and guidance. Students appreciate the support of mentors and the time staff give outside lessons and during holidays to help them catch up and learn how to manage their coursework.

- Students see D&T as relevant and useful and welcome further opportunities to develop enterprise skills and to undertake projects linked with industry and visits to restaurants to support their coursework.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are good.

- Your positive attitude and good support for D&T is evidenced by the extensive investment in resources, support and training and the positive contribution this is making to develop the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum. Together with senior leaders you have successfully provided a mixture of challenge and support to raise standards and achievement.
- The subject is well managed and consistent approaches are taken to ensure the health and safety of students. D&T staff have acted swiftly and good progress has been made in a relatively short period to ensure all students have access to and are benefiting from the new computer aided manufacturing resources.
- External and internal reviews are used effectively to inform self-evaluation and to identify priorities for improvement. Current informal monitoring and evaluation lacks sufficient rigour and frequency to ensure a consistent quality to the department's work and to check the learning and progress of individual students and groups.

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

- The gap between boys' and girls' attainment varies widely between courses at Key Stage 4. The benefits of all courses are actively promoted to both boys and girls.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring all students are challenged and that lessons consistently meet their learning needs
- making sure the quality of the department's work and the learning and progress of different groups of students and individuals is consistently monitored and evaluated.

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

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector
Subject Adviser for Design and Technology