

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mr M Buck  
Headteacher  
Lister Community School  
St Mary's Road  
Plaistow  
London  
E13 9AE

Dear Mr Buck

Ofsted survey inspection programme – design and technology

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 5 and 6 October 2009 to look at work in design and technology (D&T).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on how the school promotes awareness and relevance of D&T to students and their parents, and the extent to which their views contribute to the school's evaluation of 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 included interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is satisfactory.

Achievement in D&T

Students' achievement is satisfactory.

- On entry to the school, students' attainment is well below average and significantly so for some. Despite a modest and consistent trend of improvement at Key Stage 4, students' attainment in D&T is well below average. Most students make satisfactory progress from their starting points but this varies significantly across D&T courses. Action to tackle this

issue is already underway and systems to check individual progress and intervention are in place.

- Most students make satisfactory progress in most lessons and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities made good progress to achieve their personal targets.
- Students' personal development is satisfactory. They enjoy making products and particularly the technical challenge of joining and fitting materials accurately. Their behaviour is satisfactory. Most students act responsibly and use equipment safely but a few disrupt the learning of others and do not take as much care.

#### Quality of teaching of D&T

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- The majority of lessons are satisfactory.
- Most teachers are confident and have satisfactory subject knowledge. Demonstrations are conducted accurately and some useful strategies, such as card modelling, are helping students to convey their design ideas quickly. Further expansion of teaching methods would usefully help to make learning active and less dull. A positive start has been made in classroom displays and in the use of collections of products to support students' investigations in lessons.
- Support for students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is targeted precisely. Students persist with written tasks and listen well. Most are interested in lessons and want to do well.
- Assessment systems are in place. Students know their targets and their personal objectives for improvement. They are beginning to become familiar with National Curriculum levels and know what is expected of them in lessons. In some lessons, where the pace of learning is slow, teachers do not check sufficiently on students' learning during the lesson and adapt their plans swiftly to meet students' needs.

#### Quality of the curriculum in D&T

The quality of the D&T curriculum is inadequate.

- The scheme of work at Key Stage 3 is limited in range and depth. Students currently have no opportunity to study food technology and this prepares them inadequately for life or to take advantage of the option to study food at Key Stage 4. Plans to tackle this issue by September 2010 are in progress. Opportunities for students to learn about sustainability and industrial manufacturing processes and for all to use computer-aided design and manufacture are thinly covered in curriculum plans at both key stages.
- Action to improve the link between what students will do and what they are expected to learn has brought greater clarity to long-term planning. The current organisation of Key Stage 3, with frequent rotation of students

between teachers, is disliked by students and does not help teachers to know them and plan their progress securely. Further action is needed to bring coherence to planning progression.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are satisfactory.

- The impact of senior leaders is demonstrated well in the establishment of an action plan, common systems for assessment, consistency in the marking and feedback to students, and in regular monitoring and evaluation reports to support accurate self-evaluation. Risk assessment procedures to support health and safety are secure.
- Subject leaders are developing a vision for D&T and implementing the action plan. The pace of development is slow and, given the background of low attainment, planning has yet to secure the anticipated impact on students' progress and achievement.

The school satisfactorily promotes awareness and relevance of D&T to students and parents

- Students see relevance in what they are learning to careers, and to their development as independent learners. Their views are acted upon and subject leaders have an emerging vision for D&T.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring planning for progression is clear in curriculum plans so that teaching builds coherently upon students' earlier learning
- developing interim milestones to support subject leaders in monitoring the pace and progress of change
- using a wider range of teaching methods to inspire students, make learning more active and raise expectations.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop D&T 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

Gina White  
Her Majesty's Inspector