

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Ms L Mowatt
Acting Headteacher
Selly Park Technology College for Girls
5 Selly Park Road
Selly Park
Birmingham
B29 7PH

Dear Ms Mowatt

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 and 20 October 2009, to look at work in Design and Technology (D&T).

As outlined in our 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 students and staff, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of eight lessons.

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

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is good.

- Standards are below average when students enter in Year 7, and are broadly in line with the average for girls by the end of Year 11. School data show almost all students make good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. A key feature in accelerating progress for the lowest and middle attaining

pupils is the use of project booklets which model specific strategies to support their designing skills. At Key Stage 4, higher attaining students build upon them well and acquire new ones.

- Students enjoy D&T hugely and this is demonstrated well in their good behaviour, positive attitudes to learning and in their adoption of safe practices in using tools and machines. Students know about nutrition and the need for balanced diets and older students are able to use their knowledge to create healthy meals.
- Students are confidently developing skills in designing and making. Extensive out-of-hours support for all students to undertake practical making activities, coursework and revision support, contributes effectively to their success, particularly at Key Stage 4, and enables them to meet their targets.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching of D&T is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this very well to create the project booklets which support and promote students' progress. Teachers safely demonstrate and model strategies to motivate and engage students in lessons. The use of co-teaching, technicians and student 'experts' are effectively deployed in lessons to support students in catching up and in confidently acquiring specific skills and techniques.
- In the best lessons, teachers regularly sought feedback from students to check their understanding, challenge safe ideas and encourage students to think and take risks to come up with original and unusual solutions. In satisfactory lessons, the narrowness of the planned tasks limit opportunities for students to acquire more demanding techniques, solve challenging problems and exercise choice and decision-making as designers.
- Assessment and marking systems are securely in place. Students know what is expected of them and are clear about the next steps for improvement. The most effective marking involved perceptive written feedback to students that identified strengths and development points to improve their making skills.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

The quality of the D&T curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum meets requirements. Courses at Key Stage 4 are adequately matched to students' interests and needs. Year 11 students enjoy the opportunities they have to manage their learning and the contribution this makes to them becoming independent learners. Opportunities to do so earlier, particularly in Key Stage 3 would usefully aid students in acquiring project management skills at a high level.

- The D&T curriculum is in transition at Key Stage 3 and this is reflected in planning where opportunities for students to develop their understanding of good and poor design and their awareness of social and ethical responsibilities of designers are limited. This constrains students in reaching the highest levels of attainment.
- Students enjoy solving problems and creating products that have purpose and help others. Cross-curricular activities, visits and competitions promote this aspect of their work well and plans for further development are at an advanced stage.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are good.

- Your support and that of senior managers and governors is demonstrated well in the school-wide intervention measures to identify and support students at risk of underachieving. Decisions to recruit specialist staffing, update resources, invest in small class sizes and co-teaching have had a good impact on students' achievement in D&T.
- The subject is led well and effective in ensuring accurate assessment. Common approaches to planning and health and safety are firmly established. Much work is taking place in response to subject development planning but informal monitoring and evaluation does not capture sufficiently the impact this has on students' achievement.

The school satisfactorily promotes awareness and relevance of D&T

- Students' views inform teachers' decisions in shaping schemes of work to better meet their interests and needs. The school has a secure vision for D&T but it is not shared widely.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, focused on improving standards and included:

- ensuring students' project management skills, and their understanding of social and ethical responsibilities of designers, are developed more securely in the curriculum
- improving the rigour of monitoring and evaluation of D&T and ensuring plans include milestones to identify the specific impact they are intended to have on students.

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