

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



31 March 2010

Ms C Mangham
Headteacher
Fairfield High School
Allfoxtton Road
Horfield
Bristol
BS7 9NL

Dear Ms Mangham

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: design and technology (D&T)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit with Gina White HMI, on 1 and 2 March 2010 to look at work in 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of 12 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is satisfactory.

Achievement in D&T

Students' achievement in D&T is satisfactory overall.

- Students' attainment on entry to the school is below average. Standards remain below average by the end of Year 11 but there is now an improving trend in attainment.
- Students generally enjoy D&T and make satisfactory progress. When provided with well-planned opportunities to work more independently, they develop creative solutions to design problems. Developments in the

school are beginning to change practice to encourage more practical opportunities of this kind and to reduce the written work that, too often, limits students' enjoyment and progress in developing technological thinking.

- Assessment is not yet used securely to monitor students' progress but teachers' practice is increasingly good. Students find guidance from teachers about food and textiles which helps them to work more independently and to understand how they can manage their own learning.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is satisfactory.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is sound and helps students to appreciate safety and build their D&T knowledge. Good relationships between students and teachers promote calm and productive classrooms. Teachers' management of small group work and the individual support given vary in their impact. In some lessons, this was very effective and individual students made good and outstanding progress. Examples of probing and challenging questioning by teachers were observed but this good practice was not used consistently.
- In the best lessons, learning was planned well and based securely on students' earlier learning. Interesting and relevant activities built progressively on their previous understanding and encouraged students to explore and apply knowledge and skills well. However, this practice is not yet embedded to ensure all students are challenged sufficiently.
- Students appreciate the assessment and marking guidance that is provided, particularly at Key Stage 4. Some students are given a clear understanding of assessment criteria and are able to assess their own work and use the comments from staff more effectively. The quality of comments and guidance varies and does not enable all students to understand how they can improve.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

The quality of the curriculum in D&T is satisfactory.

- The curriculum enables students to design and make a range of products and adequately covers Key Stage 3 requirements. The Licence to Cook programme is encouraging students to develop a deeper understanding of food. Some good examples of creative and sustainable textile work are developing. Students enjoy and are positive about the independence they have to explore ideas and processes more freely in this aspect of D&T.
- The curriculum is expressed more in terms of the tasks that students are expected to perform rather than the key learning and so lacks precision, particularly in ensuring progression.
- Students enjoy their Key Stage 4 courses but repetitive written work does not always provide sufficient challenge, particularly for the more able.

Consequently, the second year of the course is not meeting students' expectations.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are satisfactory.

- The improving trend in achievement demonstrates senior leaders' support and determination to improve D&T. Team work is strong and a vision for developing D&T is shared within the department. Self-evaluation processes are developing well. The subject leader understands the subject's strengths and where improvements are required. However, monitoring and the evaluation of data concerning students' progress are insufficiently analysed to inform strategic planning.

The extent to which the school promotes awareness and relevance of D&T to students and parents

Awareness and relevance of D&T to students and parents are satisfactory.

- Students see the relevance of D&T to future jobs and general life skills. Their views are sought and inform the curriculum. There is a great enthusiasm for D&T but the vision is not shared more widely with parents and students.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising attainment further by:
 - ensuring planning is matched precisely to students' needs and is focused on what students will learn
 - using monitoring information more analytically to ensure students are making sufficient progress in all areas of D&T and that work builds on previous experiences
 - ensuring learning opportunities are engaging and teaching strategies enable students to learn in active practical ways to become independent and creative learners.

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

As I explained previously, 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

Paul Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector