

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr P Wheatley
Headteacher
Raynes Park High School
Bushey Road
London
SW20 0JL

Dear Mr Wheatley

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: design and technology (D&T)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 2 and 3 May 2012 to look at work in 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of 10 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is satisfactory.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is satisfactory.

- Students make satisfactory progress and by the time they reach Year 11 attainment is broadly average. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory overall.
- Opportunities to produce imaginative work and to use and integrate a range of manufacturing processes are helping students to develop a deeper understanding of design and materials.

Quality of teaching in D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is satisfactory.

- Teaching secures satisfactory progress overall because lessons are increasingly focused to build on students' prior knowledge and

understanding. During one Year 7 lesson, students were challenged with mechanical puzzles. This helped to consolidate a high level understanding of a range of mechanisms and to develop problem-solving skills.

- Teachers are confident and have strong subject knowledge. Relationships with students are positive. This encourages creativity and helps students to develop confidence. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to ensure that the quality of products is optimised. A range of quality products is produced with a high level of innovation and imagination.
- Teaching has improved significantly as there is a greater awareness and use of assessment of learning. This is helping teachers to monitor students' progress and to plan more effective learning opportunities. When the teacher drives the pace of learning with probing questioning and assessment students' progress is rapid. They enjoy the challenges set to take more control of their own learning. Although lessons include more challenging work further adaptation is required at times to individual's needs so that students make progress that is consistently good or better.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- Students have adequate opportunities to design and to learn how to use a range of techniques and process to support their making. They develop skills in using food ingredients to make meals. Some good use is made of computer-aided design and manufacturing. Enrichment activities enhance students' engagement and promote their enjoyment. Highly relevant projects that allow students to be creative and to personalise their learning are most successful.
- The sixth form curriculum supports small groups of students to develop their own innovative designs and to increase their skills in manufacturing effectively.
- Schemes of work are focused firmly on developing students' skills, knowledge and understanding of materials and processes. However, they are not planned in sufficient detail to promote learning for students of differing abilities. Students' awareness of other cultures, healthy living and sustainability are promoted.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

The effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T is satisfactory.

- The subject leader has a clear vision and ambition for D&T. This vision is well founded and some medium-term priorities have been identified. The hard work of the subject leader and teaching team has ensured that students are motivated and engaged by D&T. Strengths are known and actions to tackle weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning have had some success; students' progress in GCSE and A level groups is accelerating.

- The department recognises that further improvement is required. Subject leaders are very well supported by the senior team. Plans to maintain support to sustain improvement and to develop further are well focused.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that learning objectives are detailed, challenging and build on students' previous assessments
- developing students' making skills to improve the quality and finish of the products they make.

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

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Paul Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector