

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



15 December 2008

Ms P Castagnoli
Headteacher
Beaconsfield High School
Wattleton Road
Beaconsfield
Buckinghamshire
HP9 1RR

Dear Ms Castagnoli

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Creative Learning

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 8-9 December 2008 to look at creative learning.

As outlined in my initial letter, the visit had a particular focus on the ways in which you develop creative learning and the impact this is having on achievement and standards and on students' personal development.

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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of your school's promotion of creative learning was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards and personal development

Creative modes of learning are being used to enhance the already high academic standards in the school. This is helping to develop students' self confidence and sense of responsibility and encourages a more active role in personal learning.

The school is actively developing aspects of creative learning across all curricular areas. Students are encouraged to work in groups, discuss ideas, undertake research and make presentations. They feel sufficiently confident to experiment with new ideas and to learn from mistakes in order to improve their understanding. There is a structured programme of student target

setting and monitoring, which tracks the process of students' learning as well as the end results. This is complemented by interviews with tutors each term. Parents are involved in the process and are kept informed through subject information evenings and on options at the key transition points.

Students are encouraged to take on responsibilities from an early age, putting into practice many of the skills being developed through your school's promotion of creative learning, for example, decision making, teamwork and negotiation. All students in Years 7 to 11 are expected to take on a position of responsibility within their year group, and those in the sixth form are given a range of opportunities such as subject prefects, peer mentors and house captains. They are extensively involved in the local community through sixth form community service, the sports and dance leaders award and the 'leadership through languages' training. Students work with local primary schools, youth and sports clubs and a special school for the partially sighted and hearing impaired. All the students interviewed reported very positively on their experience at the school. They felt supported by their teachers, appreciated the independence and trust they received and enjoyed the extensive range of extra curricular activities. Students in the school were self confident and enthusiastic about their education and clearly enjoyed all the opportunities available to them.

Quality of teaching and learning

All the lessons observed were well structured and challenging. Students responded positively to opportunities for investigation, independent thinking, and practical problem-solving. They were willing to volunteer information and to listen to the views of others. Students worked well together and were encouraged to present their observations and work for peer review.

The school offers numerous cross curricular and themed events in all key stages, frequently involving external agencies and speakers. These enable students to understand subjects in a broader context and helps develop an understanding of the links between subjects.

The school's information technology resources are excellent. In the lessons observed these were used effectively to enhance the quality of delivery and enable teachers to develop more innovative teaching styles and strategies.

Quality of the curriculum

The school is developing a more personalised curriculum which allows students to take their GCSEs a year early in some subjects and then undertake leadership courses and community service or begin preparation for 'A' level study.

The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is a web based resource being developed within the school. It offers courses of study, lesson plans, audio and visual clips on relevant subjects, as well as being a forum for students to discuss their work and learn interactively. This allows students to study independently, undertake relevant research and receive support from staff.

The students were all most enthusiastic about this provision and felt that it had greatly enhanced their learning.

The curriculum is complemented by an extensive range of extra curricular activities, trips and subject specific visits. These included expeditions to countries such as India and Tanzania, where an appreciation of the culture was gained through living and working with the local people.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders have developed a clear vision for the future and a shared ethos which is understood and appreciated by staff and students. They have developed a well structured and comprehensive programme of professional development and actively encourage staff to take on responsibility and leadership roles. The quality of teaching is closely monitored and good practice is identified and shared with other staff. The detailed monitoring process includes the assessment of the delivery of creative learning in the lessons observed.

Equality and diversity

All students irrespective of ethnic origin achieve both academically and socially. The school integrates those with special educational needs and provides a supportive, caring environment for all.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the VLE is populated with information that is of a consistently high standard across all subject areas and involving all relevant staff
- ensuring that no student is disadvantaged by an inability to access from home the extensive online resources provided by the school.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop creative learning in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and local Learning and Skills Council and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Derek Wiles
Additional Inspector