

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr D Booth
Headteacher
Shaftesbury School
Salisbury Road
Shaftesbury
Dorset
SP7 8ER

Dear Mr Booth

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 10-11 March 2009 to look at work in Design and Technology (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 made included: interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards overall are good.

- The quality of students' work at Key Stage 3 is variable and is satisfactory overall. Students make rapid progress in developing designing and making skills in food technology but opportunities for students to apply their skills to manage projects throughout the key stage are limited.
- Most students reach above average standards by the end of Year 11 and make good progress given their attainment on entry to the school. Students achieve highly in textiles and resistant materials and the quality of their work in catering is of a high professional standard. A trend of improvement in boys' performance is established.
- Students with learning difficulties and /or disabilities achieve well in D&T compared to their other subjects. Over the last two years D&T has become more popular and an increasing proportion of students choose to

continue their studies into Key Stage 4. Few students continue with their D&T studies in the sixth form, but those who do achieve standards broadly in line with average.

- Students' personal development is good; they enjoy D&T, have good attitudes to learning and their behaviour is good overall and excellent in some lessons. Many students put in long hours with staff outside lessons to improve their grades. They act safely in lessons and recognise the importance of following procedures and not taking risks. They are developing independence and confidence in using tools and particularly cooking skills. Students in Year 9 are confident in being able to cook healthy meals.

Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and skills. They teach across a range of traditional material areas and plan learning effectively. Relationships with students are good and supportive: students are quick to ask for help if they are unsure.
- Teachers have high expectations of students and most students meet them and are challenged effectively in lessons. Students receive very good one- to-one support. In some lessons, good practice is reflected in the way teachers effectively engage and involve students, for example in helping to give demonstrations to the rest of the class.
- Assessment and feedback to students at Key Stage 4 is extensive: comprehensive advice and guidance booklets help them to manage their work and meet deadlines. The use of rewards and certificates that recognise students' increasing acquisition of skills during Key Stage 3 help them to see how well they are making progress. Further refinement of assessment and marking at Key Stage 3 would usefully show progression in evaluation and planning skills more clearly.

Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Students' expectations, interests and needs are well met through a broad range of courses. Provision for catering courses is outstanding; the facilities, including the attached restaurant provide students with superb opportunities to experience learning related to work, to develop team work skills and apply them responsibly. The needs of some Year 9 students with learning difficulties are well addressed in the 'nurture group'. As a result of this specific enhancement of the curriculum they are beginning to develop confidence, independence and cooking skills.
- The Key Stage 3 course meets requirements generally. Opportunities for students to further develop their knowledge and understanding in using electronic components and systems and control would usefully meet their

interests in making more exciting products. Students see D&T as relevant to life and future learning. Opportunities to work with engineers and designers and to undertake real designing and making projects to benefit the community may further enhance the relevance of D&T.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are good.

- The good commitment and support of yourself and senior leaders for D&T is well demonstrated in the good accommodation, regular updating of computer aided design and manufacture resources and in curriculum provision that meets students' needs and interests.
- The subject is effectively led and managed. Committed staff keep themselves up to date about national developments and technicians provide good support throughout the department.
- Self-evaluation draws effectively upon students' views but there is room for more rigour in the quality assurance of the department's work.

The extent to which inequality and stereotyping are tackled in D&T

- All students study all aspects of the subject at Key Stage 3 and the needs and interests of specific groups of learners are effectively met. Changes to courses at Key Stage 4 are encouraging more boys to study catering.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring rigour in monitoring and evaluation practices to improve the quality assurance of the department's work
- refining the Key Stage 3 scheme of work to introduce more opportunities for students to develop and apply project management skills, to work with designers and makers and to use electronics and control in more varied and stimulating projects.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector
Subject Adviser for Design and Technology