

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



21 December 2009

Mr M Hill
Executive Principal
Northallerton College
Grammar School Lane
Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL6 1DD

Dear Mr Hill

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 9 and 10 December 2009 to look at work in 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.

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

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is good.

- A trend of above-average results at GCSE and higher level attainment at A* and A grades is well established in D&T by the end of Key Stage 4. However, the school is aware of the challenge to raise students' performance in resistant materials and engineering.

- Students' make good progress at Key Stage 4 and around 16% of students, who continue to study D&T in the sixth form, make at least satisfactory progress to achieve A-level qualifications.
- Students enjoy the opportunity to exercise choice and decision-making when undertaking projects. Students in Year 13 are developing independence and essential project-management skills by working with clients. The local community benefits from events planned by students undertaking hospitality and catering courses and those from other courses who solve real problems and contribute to improving the quality of life for users.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching of D&T is good.

- Teachers' expertise is well deployed in using computer-aided design and manufacturing resources effectively, and in the development of learning materials and their detailed knowledge of examination syllabi. Teachers structure lessons effectively. Regular assessment informs teaching and consistent written feedback is established across the teaching team. Personalised verbal feedback is valued by students. They know how well they are doing and the next step to take.
- In one lesson, exceptionally detailed knowledge of each student, the stage they are at in their individualised projects and encouragement for them to take ownership of design decisions, encouraged students to take responsibility and independence in learning. However, a narrow range of teaching methods used to convey theory resulted in some dull lessons.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

The quality of the D&T curriculum is good.

- Most students are happy with their courses and generally feel they are better than they expected. The exception is GCSE food and the school is working to tackle this situation. Sixth-form students are developing a sense of design appreciation. Unusual and creative ideas are demonstrated well in textiles and Year 13 students explain convincingly the inspiration for their work. However, the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and post-16 is thin in relation to students' awareness of sustainability and the moral choices designers and engineers have to make to solve problems.
- Students value the detailed learning materials which they can access at times to suit them and their pace of learning. Some students describe specific examples of how they have used them along with regular catch-up sessions to get back on track.
- Support for transition to the next stage of learning and preparation for university is good. The school is aware of the need to develop transition from Key Stage 3 to ensure students make a smooth progression to GCSE courses.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are good.

- Senior leaders' support for the development of D&T is demonstrated well in the impact that improved resources and class sizes have on students' achievement in D&T.
- Subject leadership ensures systems of self-evaluation and monitoring of plans are firmly established. Due attention is given to health and safety within the department and this is demonstrated well in risk assessment, in students' safe use of complex equipment and in investment in health and safety training.

The school promotes good awareness and relevance of D&T

- The school's vision for D&T centres on preparing students for the future and to be successful in examinations. This is demonstrated clearly in the curriculum and in results. Students know they are expected to succeed and resources and guidance firmly support them to this end. Parents recognise the support staff give to their children but few follow the detailed information provided online, although they know it is there.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring all teachers use a wider range of methods to enliven learning of theory in lessons
- developing the curriculum to ensure a more prominent role of sustainability and awareness of the moral decisions designers and engineers make when designing.

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