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Mrs C Palmer
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Palmer

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: design and technology (D&T)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 18 October 2010 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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is satisfactory.

Achievement in D&T

Pupils' achievement in D&T is satisfactory.

- A good range of activities in Nursery and Reception allows children to develop their use of simple tools. For instance, children in Reception use scissors to cut cardboard carefully to create a simple basket to carry a small loaf of bread.
- Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in a range of D&T-related activities to reach broadly expected outcomes at the end of Year 6. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language is satisfactory because of personalised support and a focus on subject-specific vocabulary. However, sometimes more able pupils are not fully challenged in the tasks set for them and opportunities are missed to extend their skills in writing within their evaluations.

- Pupils respond well to opportunities for small group work and peer assessment because the subject provides good opportunities to develop personal and social skills. Pupils in Key Stage 2 state that they find D&T enjoyable because it is practical and teachers often link D&T activities with other subjects to make learning even more relevant to their needs.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching of D&T is satisfactory.

- Some good practice was observed during the visit. Lessons are planned carefully and managed well to develop pupils' skills. Questions are used appropriately to check levels of understanding but these are not always carefully targeted to pupils' abilities and opportunities are sometimes missed to really extend the learning of more able pupils. However, resources are used well and teachers use the interactive whiteboards effectively to illustrate key teaching points and support pupils' learning. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge overall.
- The assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory. Staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes make ongoing observations and effective use of cameras to record significant learning in D&T-related activities. Teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2 make appropriate use of assessment sheets to record whether pupils are working at the expected levels for their age at the end of each D&T unit.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- A broad range of D&T activities provides appropriate opportunities for the development of skills to build progressively on those previously learnt. Cross-curricular themes are planned well to support the development of designing and making skills while developing pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles and links with other subjects such as science. For example, pupils in Year 5 design and make a healthy breakfast as part of their science topic to support the learning of pupils in Year 1 who are also learning about how to be healthy. This activity provides good opportunities to develop personal and social skills while building an ethos of inclusion and a positive climate for learning within the school.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to formally evaluate the quality of products made. However, opportunities are missed to improve outcomes in literacy by encouraging pupils' to write reflectively and at length in their evaluations. The use of information and communication technology to develop pupils' D&T skills in the past has not been sufficient. However, recent purchases of equipment and staff training reflect the school's drive to rectify this shortcoming.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are satisfactory.

- The enthusiastic and knowledgeable new coordinator demonstrates a clear vision for the future development of the subject. Improvement planning is satisfactory, fitting well alongside the school's overarching priorities of becoming a healthy school. Self-evaluation is satisfactory but is not yet underpinned sufficiently by good monitoring arrangements. This does not provide a firm platform to identify key development priorities, to improve pupils' outcomes further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that more able pupils are provided with sufficient levels of challenge in all D&T lessons and extend their writing skills
- planning more opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology within D&T activities
- ensuring that self-evaluation is used to:
 - effectively monitor the quality of provision
 - identify areas for further improvement to raise pupils' outcomes.

I hope that 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 published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector