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Dear Mr Barcynski

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 24 January 2011 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 good.

Achievement in D&T

Pupils' achievement in D&T is good.

- Although pupils' attainment across the school is low, given the nature of their needs, they make good progress from their starting points. Pupils are keen to take part in D&T activities and enjoy their lessons. They make good progress in designing products and make good advances in their measuring, shaping, joining and finishing skills. By the time they leave the school, they understand that a range of materials can be used in different ways to create products. However, their understanding of products for different consumers is a harder concept that is not always understood. Typically, all pupils gain an entry level qualification in D&T by Year 11.
- Pupils are enthused by making. They follow instructions and understand that the rules in the workshop are there to keep them safe. They are encouraged to make design decisions, which are often related to the

product's colour and materials. They understand how to make the product and are proud of their finished pieces of work. However, pupils could be allowed to exercise more choice, for example by identifying the best techniques for joining and shaping materials.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching is good.

- Teachers use their good knowledge and understanding to enthuse their pupils. As a consequence, learning is good overall. Planning identifies the key skills that pupils are to learn and teachers have a clear awareness of the levels that pupils are working at. Consequently, teachers are clear about the type and nature of support that each individual will need. However, only limited evidence exists of modifications to tasks to meet the full range of needs. Sometimes if more able pupils complete a task early the opportunity is not taken to challenge and extend their learning before others complete their tasks.
- Teachers and teaching assistants offer patient and nurturing support to pupils and, as a consequence, pupils thoroughly enjoy D&T and feel that they are doing well. Although some support and questioning by teaching assistants is good the quality varies; sometimes teaching assistants over-direct the pupils. This indicates a need for a more detailed understanding of D&T. Teachers have undertaken some appropriate continuous professional development, but the full benefit of this is not yet in evidence.
- Information and communication technology is used appropriately. For example, pupils in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 are introduced to computer-aided design software.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- The curriculum provides a broad range of opportunities for pupils to work with a variety of suitable materials and techniques. These help to develop their awareness of technology and a range of experiences develop their practical skills. Although food technology has been taught, this tended to focus on food preparation skills rather than using food as a medium for designing, making and evaluating products.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are good.

- School leaders have successfully created enthusiasm among pupils for designing and making. A good range of resources for D&T is available across the school.
- The assessment, monitoring and reporting of pupils' progress are good and annual reports identify pupils' progress and strengths. However, targets for improvement often focus on pupils' attitudes and well-being

and do not always identify where D&T knowledge and skills need to be improved.

- The self-evaluation of the effectiveness of D&T is generally accurate. However, monitoring has not always included the work within the primary classrooms. The provision and outcomes have been developed effectively by the subject leader. He is clear about where most improvement is needed. However, implementation plans lack some of the necessary detail, including clear aims, actions, timescales and arrangements for monitoring and evaluation.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that all support staff understand the nature of D&T to enable them to support more effectively the development of pupils' understanding and skills within lessons
- extending the curriculum to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to learn about food and investigate foods as products for different users
- improving the development plans and monitoring and evaluation arrangements for D&T.

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

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector