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Mr J Brookes
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Brookes

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 1 February 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 two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is outstanding.

Achievement in D&T

Pupils' achievement in D&T is outstanding.

- Attainment is well above average. Pupils enter Reception with skills above national expectations. These are systemically built upon and developed through Reception and Key Stages 1 and 2 and support their learning of D&T well. Challenging targets are set and pupils are given focused support to help them make outstanding progress. A large majority of pupils gained Level 5 and above in 2010 and more than a third reached Level 6.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. They are able to organise themselves and work on their own research and investigations both in class and at home. They apply scientific and mathematical ideas well to promote their learning in D&T. They enjoy the challenging D&T activities that they are given in lessons. Samples of pupils' work confirm the high quality of designing and making using a wide range of materials.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress at least in line with expectations and some make outstanding progress. This is because they are fully integrated in lessons. The carefully planned support from teaching assistants ensures that these pupils take full part in lessons.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching is outstanding.

- Teachers' evident enthusiasm for D&T seizes pupils' interest. Work is imaginative and flexible. Pupils are encouraged to follow their own lines of enquiry. Teachers amend their planning to support pupils in exercising their imaginations and developing their ideas throughout their learning. For example, pupils in Reception reading *The Hungry Caterpillar* were curious about the fruit the caterpillar ate and this led them to preparing and making a salad with a range of unusual fruits.
- Teachers use a wide range of methods in lessons which helps pupils to understand new ideas and to become skilled in different techniques. For example, Reception pupils learnt how to hold fruit correctly and safely for cutting and chopping. In Years 4 and 5, pupils used their knowledge of structures to design and make a range of shelters in a lesson about the Second World War. They used different methods of strengthening them and tested them to find the best structure.
- Pupils receive helpful feedback on all aspects of their work. Teachers appropriately moderate each others' marking to ensure that there is consistency in their judgements. Staff identify weaknesses in pupils' learning and address them. Questioning by all staff is very skilful and prompts pupils to explain their thinking. Any misconceptions are then corrected.
- Pupils explained that they liked D&T a lot because they could plan and make things themselves. They talked confidently about the techniques they had learnt and how they tested their products. Pupils especially enjoyed the D&T days when experts from companies such as Shell came in to work with them on their Balloon Buggies. The days are used strategically to deepen pupils' understanding of technological developments.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, both in lessons and around the school. They respect each others' views and take it in turns to explain and discuss. This maturity promotes high-quality class work because pupils support each others' learning in pairs and groups.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides imaginatively for themes to be taught across subjects. This extends the time available for D&T activities and provides pupils with relevant designing and making opportunities. At present, the curriculum themes have not been checked

to ensure full coverage of all the D&T areas of knowledge and understanding.

- Pupils enjoy learning and would like to do even more D&T. Whole-school D&T activity days enrich pupils' knowledge and understanding, and link well to mathematics and science. Such days are supported effectively by external partners. As a result, pupils' learning and application of designing and making are improved. The Eco School work feeds into D&T well and broadens the contexts for learning for pupils. They enjoy growing fruits and vegetables and using their produce in D&T lessons. Take-up of after-school opportunities is high and these extend and reinforce pupils' learning well.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are outstanding.

- The subject coordinator has a strong track record of innovation. She has a drive and enthusiasm for the subject which is communicated effectively to all staff. Her passion and commitment for D&T are infectious and she is a strong advocate for the subject. Despite few opportunities for subject-specific professional development she has kept practice and resources up to date.
- Pupils are encouraged to risk-assess their activities and this improves their attitudes and skills in keeping themselves and others safe. D&T contributes effectively to the school priority to strengthen links with the wider community.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the curriculum provides for the full range of D&T activities so that pupils have even greater choice and opportunity to apply D&T designing and making skills.

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

Michelle Parker
Her Majesty's Inspector