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Mr P Gray
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Gray

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 students, during my visit on 4 and 5 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

Achievement in D&T

Students' achievement in D&T is good.

- Students' achieve well and make good progress, many from starting points that are in line with those expected for their age. Attainment has improved in the last two years and GCSE results were above average in 2010. The best performing subjects were systems and control and food technology. Leaders are aware that there is capacity to raise achievement further for all students. The progress of all groups of students, including boys and those with special educational needs is improving. For example, boys are finding recently introduced vocational engineering courses matched well to their future aspirations. Students say that they enjoy D&T activities, especially when engaged in practical work and taking risks when designing.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching is good.

- The quality of teaching is consistently good because lessons are planned well and teachers' subject knowledge is secure. A good range of teaching and learning strategies engages students well in lessons and resources are used effectively to support learning. Good-quality questioning by teachers helps students to thoroughly analyse and think through how products work and materials can be sustained such as looking at the materials used to make an electric drill in a Year 10 systems lesson. The school is rightly seeking to further improve the quality of teaching to raise achievement further.
- Assessment practice is focused sharply on ensuring every student is making the progress they should. D&T capability is regularly checked and progress is monitored in depth. Students understand the process and are able to access information easily which tells them how well they are doing at any stage of the course.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- Programmes and activities are matched well to students' needs and promote innovation when designing. Strong links with industry provide a rich resource of work-related contexts. An appropriate range of materials and components is used to design and make a range of products. Opportunities to use electronic components, learn about control systems and to cook are embedded firmly. Computers are used well to assist design and manufacture. Good links with art and vocational courses enhance learning in D&T and are a feature of the curriculum.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are good.

- D&T subject and classroom leadership and management are strong and make a good contribution to the development of D&T capability. Learning is supported well by a good team ethos which values the subject as it operates within a broad curriculum. Leaders at all levels are maintaining the capacity to improve D&T and senior managers ensure students who choose the subject are making the progress they should. The school has identified the right areas to further raise attainment and achievement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- continuing to improve the quality of teaching
- ensuring attainment and achievement in D&T continue to rise.

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

Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector