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Ms C Kattirtzi
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Dear Ms Kattirtzi

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 24 and 25 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of nine lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is outstanding.

Achievement in D&T

Students' achievement in D&T is outstanding.

- Most students enter the school with attainment and experiences in D&T that reflect the national expectations for their age. Most students exceed the expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. Almost all students take a GCSE in D&T and nearly all of them attain at least a grade A, generally with around half attaining an A* grade. This is significantly above the national average. In the sixth form, the take-up of courses is increasing with notable successes, with good retention and full completion rates.
- Excellent student behaviour and attitudes to learning are resolutely encouraged and supported by enthusiastic and hard-working staff. This cooperative learning environment ensures that students enjoy what they are doing and culminates in work that is completed to a very high standard in all year groups.

- Students' progress in D&T is outstanding. Those students with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities do equally well. This is the result of the highly effective support and guidance provided during lessons and D&T activities. D&T makes an excellent contribution to students' personal development and their mental and physical well-being.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching is outstanding.

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge that they share with students effectively. Students are trained to assess each others' work and they provide each other with helpful comments that are sensitively written.
- Homework is set and marked on a regular basis. It provides stimulus for the next lesson and reinforces work already undertaken.
- End-of-project assessments ensure that students know the National Curriculum level that they have attained, how they can improve their work, and how to reach the next level. The monitoring of students' progress is highly effective overall, and is more advanced for examination groups.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- The types and levels of courses successfully meet the needs of students in Years 10 to 13. However, consideration could be given to extend those in the sixth form to include other aspects of product design.
- Opportunities are missed to make closer links between science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects to enhance students' understanding, for example by ensuring that they have meaningful first-hand experiences of investigating and using technologically advanced materials that respond to their surroundings.
- Students have access to basic computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM). Sometimes they also need greater access to other technologically advanced machining to enable them to trial and create products, of professional quality, through rapid prototype techniques.
- After-school clubs and competitions make an outstanding contribution to enriching opportunities for students' learning. The variety and high-quality of this work contribute significantly to students' enjoyment and understanding of the relevance of D&T, and their emotional well-being.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are outstanding.

- Professional development of staff ensures that they have relevant knowledge of health and safety standards, and current industry practice.

- The dynamic support and guidance of leaders and managers at all levels successfully ensures that improvements are made continually in all aspects of D&T. The commitment that all students undertake a GCSE in technology is testimony to the value placed in the subject. That all students complete their courses and do so exceedingly well demonstrates their enjoyment and their passion for the subject.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the links between the STEM subjects
- ensuring all students have more opportunities to experience and use technologically advanced materials as part of D&T
- providing more first-hand experiences of technologically advanced manufacturing processes in all year groups.

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

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector