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Mr P Halliwell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Halliwell

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 8 and 9 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work and observation of nine lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

Achievement in D&T

Students' achievement in D&T is good.

- Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points to achieve above average results in GCSE D&T examinations by the end of Key Stage 4. This good progress is underpinned by teaching methods that support and guide them step-by-step to meet coursework requirements. Students in Key Stage 3 welcome opportunities to make more products. Their understanding of modern and smart materials and the development of decision-making are relatively weaker aspects of their knowledge and skills.
- Students' attitudes to learning are good. Their enthusiasm for D&T is evident in the boys' take-up of the subject in the joint sixth form and the quantity of work they produce in lessons. Students undertaking

examinations readily take up opportunities for extra study and some put in considerable time working at home. The subject makes a good contribution to their personal development and they are acquiring the skills to become independent learners.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching of D&T is good.

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of specialist technical aspects of D&T are used to good effect to manage lessons safely. Expectations in lessons are high and made clear to students. Teaching is consistently well focused on developing students' understanding of how their work is assessed. Criteria are explained well to students so that they understand and apply them carefully to identify the strengths and weaknesses in their work. Students are becoming adept in knowing what is required to reach their target grades. This is more securely embedded at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than in Key Stage 3.
- Older students are using computers effectively to support their designing and making. Consequently, they are developing better quality and accuracy in their coursework.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Boys show interest in designing and making textile materials. They are developing a sound understanding of how modern and smart materials are applied in textiles but this is not developed enough in relation to their study of resistant materials, electronics and systems and control. The development in Year 7 to combine textiles with electronics is a positive step towards modernising the projects and increasing students' understanding of technological innovation.
- Developments to broaden the D&T curriculum by providing opportunities for students to study food technology and to learn how to develop their cooking skills are enthusiastically welcomed by students.
- The enrichment of the D&T curriculum, through competitions, events, revision and the weekly study sessions for sixth formers, makes a significant contribution to students' achievement and engagement in the subject. The school is using its specialist technology status well to support the professional development of teachers in local schools.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are good.

- The subject leader has a good understanding of the strengths of the department and what is needed to improve further. He is well supported by the senior leadership team in monitoring and evaluating provision and

outcomes. Students' progress is monitored effectively and underachieving students are identified and supported. Students' views inform self-evaluation and changes to the curriculum. However, accreditation for food technology has yet to be introduced.

- Health and safety are managed well within the department. The constraints of small rooms in parts of the D&T accommodation are considered in planning activities and tasks by teachers. Students demonstrate responsible attitudes to health and safety.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that all students have opportunities to use technologically advanced materials to realise their ideas
- seeking accreditation for students who wish to pursue their studies in food technology from Year 9 onwards.

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

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector