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Dear Mr Brown

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 16 March 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

Achievement in D&T is good.

- Well-planned and imaginative activities enable children in Reception to make good progress in using tools, such as scissors, to carefully cut paper and card. They can use a variety of construction apparatus to build a prototype of a cage for a hamster to specific criteria before drawing a simple design. These activities provide a good foundation for future D&T work.
- Good progress is maintained in all other year groups across the school in a wide range of D&T-related skills. Well-planned activities provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their ability to make products of quality such as felt puppets in Year 2 and Caribbean masks in Year 4. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 demonstrate a good understanding of the key processes of planning, designing and making in their investigations about bridges.

Detailed evaluations demonstrate the importance of these key processes while providing opportunities for the development of literacy skills.

- All pupils enjoy what they do in D&T and are very proud of the products that they make. They learn how to use tools safely and are developing a good awareness of how to keep healthy; such as making bread and healthy snacks in food technology sessions. Older pupils work well together in small groups to solve problems; for example when investigating the strength of card to build a model bridge.

Quality of teaching in D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is good.

- The quality of teaching in D&T is consistently good across the school. Lessons are well planned and organised effectively to ensure that resources are readily available. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use questions well at different levels of complexity to determine pupils' understanding and to challenge their thinking even further. Imaginative techniques linked to real life situations, such as a failure of a bridge structure in another country, are used well to engage pupils in learning new concepts. All staff provide effective support and guidance for pupils in lessons. This is especially so for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities through activities to support their accuracy, such as completing drawings and plans for their bridge on screen with the help of adult support, instead of drawing it on paper.
- The procedures for the assessment of pupils' progress are good. The achievements of each pupil are recorded against specific criteria within a computer-based system to facilitate the monitoring of progress. Work completed by older pupils is marked well to indicate clearly how they can improve their skills further.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- An exciting and varied curriculum provides good opportunities for the progressive development of D&T skills. Teachers link D&T very effectively with other aspects of the curriculum, such as topics in geography and history. The clear identification of D&T skills being covered for each year group helps to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress as they move through the school.
- Well-planned units of work provide a good balance to the overall curriculum. Good use is made of information and communication technology in D&T; for example, older pupils develop good skills in completing designs using a computer program. Good opportunities are planned for pupils to develop their cooking skills and strong links with local business partners, local artisans and a secondary school provide greater levels of enrichment.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are good.

- The subject is led well. The subject coordinator and senior leaders demonstrate a clear vision for the place of D&T within the overall curriculum. It is effectively shared with all staff and evident within the wide range of experiences planned for the pupils. However, monitoring and self-evaluation are yet to be used systematically to improve pupils' outcomes and the quality of provision further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- monitoring the quality of teaching and learning with greater rigour to identify areas for further improvement.

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

Philip Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector