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Mr R Royle
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Royle

Ofsted 2011–12 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 14 April 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 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

Achievement in D&T

Pupils' achievement in D&T is good.

- D&T makes a strong contribution to pupils' success in managing their severe behavioural and complex learning needs. They achieve well and make good progress from much lower starting points than normally found because of large gaps in their learning. Many gain GCSE and BTEC accreditation in resistant materials, food technology and hospitality and catering by the time they leave in Year 11. Pupils use computer-aided design to successfully design and model their ideas. Their capability to make products with accuracy and precision is well developed through a range of practical activities which includes designing and making beehives, Easter cakes, and clocks.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is good.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and resources are well chosen to support project work. Expectations of what can be achieved are high and challenging D&T tasks are well tailored to individual needs and completed at a brisk pace. Intervention is sensitive and pupils' understanding is frequently checked. Teaching commands the respect of pupils who value the opportunities they have to engage in practical work in a safe environment. The teamwork among staff to engage pupils and the guidance and support they provide to them are outstanding features of the teaching. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and assessment information is used well to plan the next steps in learning.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- Pupils' enjoyment of learning through practical work is central to the curriculum. The curriculum provides a good range of D&T activities which meets the needs and interests of the pupils well, together with relevant contexts which are often based on the outdoor environment surrounding the school. The school knows that more use of systems and control components is an area to develop to further broaden the D&T curriculum. Strong links with local businesses and the community enrich the work, for example a pupil is working with a local haulage company on his GCSE project work.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

The effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T is good.

- D&T is highly valued by leaders and managers at all levels and its purpose is clearly understood. Rigorous self-evaluation accurately identifies the major strengths and areas for development. An outstanding feature is the widely shared vision for D&T which ensures that the subject continues to flourish and inspires total commitment from pupils, parents and staff.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- further broadening the curriculum to include more systems and control work.

I hope 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