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Mrs A Leigh
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Leigh

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 16 June 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 during a learning walk.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is satisfactory.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is satisfactory.

- Pupils' attainment across the school is generally in line with expectations for their age and they make satisfactory progress overall. Children in the Reception class can talk about the features of the models they make. Play activities support their investigation of materials and their properties and this strengthens and deepens in Key Stage 1. By the end of the key stage, pupils develop basic skills, and in carefully controlled situations they learn about moveable and fixed joints. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils develop good technical sewing skills, become more adept at solving complex problems, learn to test their work and use pulley mechanisms. Pupils' planning and evaluation skills and their ability to work to criteria are relatively underdeveloped due to the nature of the curriculum.

- Pupils enjoy making their models move and acquiring technical skills in food preparation and sewing. They follow rules to work safely and collaborate well in teamwork situations.

Quality of teaching in D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is satisfactory.

- Teachers' management of lessons and use of a range of strategies and good questioning skills to promote learning are significant strengths of the teaching and were observed in all lessons. Teaching assistants were used effectively to support pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to complete the work. Computers and video conferencing helped to support learning very well, for example to record pupils' experiments in using pneumatic systems and to enable Reception Class pupils to learn about toys and the materials used to make them in the past.
- Tasks were well chosen to engage pupils and hold their interest and they did so very effectively. However, the contribution they made to pupils' progress and learning about D&T and to meeting users' needs varied. For example, pupils learnt how to make levers to make pop-up fathers' day cards, but opportunities to use this knowledge to personalise them to their father's interests were constrained by the topic.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- A strong emphasis on making models, using textiles, and good opportunities to make food and to learn about other cultures characterise the curriculum. The organisation of the school's curriculum into topics provides a breadth of experiences but the relevance of D&T knowledge and skills varies in the tasks and activities in the topics. The school has not analysed the topics to ensure that they promote progression and pupils' good achievement in D&T. Contexts for pupils' designing and making are not sufficiently focused on making functional products that meet the needs of different users. Too often pupils' designing is set in a historical period or is overly concerned with decoration. Opportunities to learn about current technological developments are limited and the school rightly identify a need to review the curriculum in D&T plans.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

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

- The subject leader has a good overview of the quality of work taking place and has tackled issues of storage and resources effectively. Close links with art, design and craft are well established and reflected in pupils' work. The school's vision for D&T is changing. It is linked to aspirations to prepare pupils for a changing technological world but this is at an early

stage of development and has yet to be fully shared with staff, pupils and parents.

- The subject leader is well supported by senior leaders. School systems for monitoring and evaluation are adopted and inform improvement planning. Systems do not ensure that pupils' progress in D&T is effectively monitored, evaluated and assessed. Few opportunities for subject-specific training are available to enable teachers to stay up to date with developments in D&T, although good use is made of what has been provided to improve pupils' technical skills and challenge their thinking to make moving models.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing a shared vision for D&T in the school which is underpinned with training
- ensuring pupils' progress in D&T is monitored and assessed consistently across the school
- identifying D&T concepts, knowledge and skills within the topics and tasks in the curriculum and ensuring that they are structured to promote better progression and achievement for pupils.

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