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Mr J Duprey  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Duprey

**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 students, during my visit with my colleague Tim Bristow HMI on 1 July 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 eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is satisfactory.

**Achievement in D&T**

Achievement in D&T is satisfactory.

- Most students make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 to reach standards in line with the national expectations for their age. Small numbers of students continue to study courses in D&T and related vocational qualifications. Attainment and progress vary between courses. Trends of high attainment in BTEC Engineering are well established and provide a good grounding for more advanced courses. Results in food and product design improved in 2010 from below average, although results in textiles are low and a high proportion of students does not complete the course in motor vehicle studies.

- Most students made satisfactory progress in lessons, they were engaged in their courses, followed instructions, knew and applied good health and safety practice and were able to identify risks in work situations. Some students are developing responsibility for leading teams and improving their performance: this is demonstrated well in motor vehicle studies. However, students' independence and decision-making are limited in some courses and are actively constrained when teachers make decisions for them.

### **Quality of teaching in D&T**

The quality of teaching in D&T is satisfactory.

- Teachers' technical knowledge in their specialist areas is good. Relationships between staff and students are positive and contribute well to the good behaviour in lessons. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress as a result of the support received in lessons. For example, tasks in food demanded a high level of literacy skills and support enabled students to decode terminology and understand their assessment tasks. Students made good progress in engineering lessons and worked with some urgency and independence to complete assessment tasks.
- Occasionally, tasks are focused too narrowly to enable students to reach the higher grades and are not tailored sufficiently to fully challenge students or meet their needs.
- Students know their current assessment level and the targets they are working to but are unsure of the specific steps needed to reach the higher levels and grades. Guidance and support to engineering students are well developed.

### **Quality of the curriculum in D&T**

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

- Students thoroughly enjoy the practical aspects of the D&T curriculum but some find that the separation of theory, which is a major feature in some courses, is boring and not easily understood. This has a negative impact on their progress. In some Key Stage 3 units of work, and in the Engineering course, theory is integrated well into practical activities and better matches the way in which designers and engineers work in practice. The current Key Stage 3 course is satisfactory but further collaboration is required between the various specialists to eliminate the duplication that students experience and to improve the progress they make. Subject leaders recognise this issue and are determined to tackle it.
- Good progression in engineering is promoted through courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Students are enthusiastic and many fulfil their aspirations to become engineers. Enrichment of the D&T curriculum is relatively weak and students' awareness of how technology is used in society, and the wide-ranging opportunities it presents for jobs and careers, is underdeveloped.

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T**

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

- Both subject leaders are maintaining results within the department and their work to begin to introduce computer-aided design has been successful in some Key Stage 4 courses. However, they have yet to develop and share a vision and ambition for D&T to drive improvement and bring about a step change in attainment and progress.
- Senior leaders' support for the subject is well demonstrated in the good provision of resources and in the building of new facilities. Formal systems to monitor and evaluate students' progress and the quality of teaching and learning are in place. Health and safety are regularly monitored and relevant training ensures that teachers' qualifications are up to date.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- ensuring that the vision and ambition for D&T are fully developed to drive improvement in the subject and securely raise achievement to good
- ensuring that work is tailored to meet the needs of all students and challenges them
- promoting D&T by enriching the curriculum to deepen students' awareness of technological relevance in society and to improve their understanding of related careers.

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**