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20 July 2011

Mrs T Roberts
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Roberts

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 7 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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is good.

- From generally low starting points, pupils make good progress in developing their D&T skills over time so that by the time they leave in Year 6 their attainment is broadly in line with expectations.
- Children in the Reception class are able to make simple decisions about the models they would like to make and the materials and the joining methods that they would like to use. Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils confidently make decisions about their designs and their model-making skills are sound. They are able to draw labelled diagrams of the models that they are planning to make and they are able to select materials that they will use based on their properties. However, they do not always go on to plan the sequence in which they are going to work.

- Pupils develop an understanding of safe working practices, particularly when using tools. From an early age, they take turns to be responsible for the safe working practices of their group. For example, in the Reception class some children act as 'safety spies' to look out for anyone who was not working safely and they are clear what this means. By the time pupils reach the end of Key Stage 2, they can create designs and work with a variety of materials and equipment with increasing accuracy.
- Pupils' attitudes to D&T are very positive. Their behaviour in lessons is good and sometimes outstanding with many examples of pupils helping one another and working cooperatively.

Quality of teaching in D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge about the nature of products and about how to use tools accurately. Tasks are presented in interesting ways. For example, Year 6 pupils took great pride in making their scented drawer sachets.
- Teachers are clear about the process of designing, making and evaluating products. However, at times, pupils follow instructions when making products rather than being challenged to devise and work to their own sequences and plans.
- Teachers' explanations are clear and additional adults are used effectively. For example, teaching assistants helped children to develop their finishing skills when using clay to make leaf pots.
- The practice of assigning each pupil a clear role, such as project manager, resource investigator or administrator, effectively ensures that they all ably contribute to group work.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to check on pupils' understanding and to challenge their ideas. This is particularly so in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where questioning is subtly used to improve children's language, for example, to extend their explanations.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and meaningful links are made between subjects. However, a relative weakness is the lack of planned opportunities for pupils to work with mechanisms and control technology in a progressive way.
- The use of an 'apprentice' style challenge for each class, in which pupils demonstrated their designing and making skills to make products such as sweets and bath bombs, was particularly successful in developing pupils' awareness of business and enterprise contexts.
- Opportunities for Reception-age children to develop early D&T skills are good. Children have good opportunities to work indoors and outdoors,

with access to a good range of resources, including small and large construction kits. However, some of the construction kits offered limited opportunity to develop fine motor skills. Additionally the storage of some construction kits is underdeveloped in encouraging children to sort the components and to allow easy access to parts.

- The curriculum is enriched effectively by a range of clubs, including card making and crafts, which pupils are often able to attend with their parents and carers.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

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

- Senior leaders and staff have a good overview of the school's work in D&T. Effective monitoring has identified where individual staff have strengths, which are being shared. Detailed mapping of the curriculum by year group, including the topics taught, materials and techniques used, has accurately identified where further development is needed. All teachers are clear about their role in implementing new ways of working. For example, all staff have enthusiastically embraced the 'apprentice' style approach to recent D&T topics. Staff have a clear understanding of D&T that reflects the unique nature of the subject.
- Good systems are in place for assessing standards in D&T and the development of a portfolio of levelled work from across the school has helped staff to understand the standards that pupils are reaching. Some good practices within the annual reports to parents identify achievements in D&T, including where pupils are reaching expected or above expected levels, but these are not found in all reports.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the use of mechanisms and control technology.

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

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector