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Mrs M Martin  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Martin

### **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 on 14 and 15 September 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 good.

#### **Achievement in D&T**

Achievement in D&T is good.

- By the end of Key Stage 3 students' attainment is in line with expectations for their age and most make satisfactory progress. Few students choose to continue with D&T at Key Stage 4 or in the sixth form, but those that do make good progress and reach high standards.
- In lessons, students made satisfactory gains in developing understanding and skills, but other factors contribute to their good learning. These include the development over time of good-quality making skills as a result of the strong emphasis on functionality when designing products. Students' attitudes to learning are very good and their good organisational skills and professional approach to health and safety are enhanced through trialling recipes at home.

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

The quality of teaching in D&T is satisfactory.

- Excellent relationships between students and staff create a good atmosphere for learning. Teachers manage lessons well and safely and both staff and students make the best use of space, particularly when class sizes are large. Established systems in food technology, such as good briefing of teaching assistants and well-explained roles help to promote good teamwork between students. In all lessons, good attention was given to students' understanding of specialist terms and the general development of their literacy skills.
- In lessons, the quality of teaching is satisfactory rather than good. Teachers have good specialist technical knowledge but activities tended to be pitched to what was expected of the average student. The level of challenge and learning objectives were less precise about what the more able or weaker students were expected to learn and understand.
- In the best lessons, students had opportunities to discuss and explain their thinking and they were encouraged to check their work to find out where they need to improve. More generally, teaching and learning strategies were narrow and students listened attentively or took notes. Lessons that did not provide enough opportunities for discussion meant teachers could not diagnose sufficiently where students had misconceptions or pre-existing knowledge in order to inform their planning of the next lesson to better meet individual needs.

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

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

- Out-of-school support and participation in competitions and visits play an important role in older students becoming self-reliant in managing their time and their coursework. Key Stage 4 students and sixth formers find their work in D&T relevant in developing skills for life and specialist careers. They value the advice and guidance teachers provide about related jobs and courses. They say it helps them to take their next steps in education and training.
- Currently the Key Stage 3 scheme of work, which is studied by all students in the school, lacks clarity and vision as to what it contributes to the many students who choose not to pursue their studies to examination level. The designing and making aspects are enjoyed by most students but relatively few opportunities are provided to explore the key issues of innovative design, sustainability and technological developments through learning about modern and smart materials and computer-aided design and manufacturing. The school's plans to introduce more study of electronics in the Key Stage 3 scheme of work are well founded.

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

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

- The subject leader is well supported by the senior leadership team. The complimentary skills of staff in the department are used to good effect to guide the development of D&T and recent professional development has swiftly led to better preparation and guidance for students undertaking examination courses.
- Systems of assessment, health and safety and monitoring and evaluation are firmly embedded. Effective use is made of student views to inform the evaluation of provision and modifications to the curriculum are underway. However, analysis following the scrutiny of students' work does not consistently identify the strengths and weaknesses to inform teaching and learning and curriculum development.

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

- maximising every girl's progress by improving the quality of lesson planning so that objectives are sharply defined and wider use is made of teaching and learning strategies to better meet students' needs and to challenge them
- developing Key Stage 3 to improve students' progress and embed a clear vision of the contribution D&T makes to preparing all students for an increasingly technological future.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop D&T in the school.

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Gina White**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**