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Headteacher
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Dear Mr Doctor

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 24 November 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 six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is satisfactory.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is satisfactory.

- The breadth of craft activity taking place in Reception classes is well focused to develop children's skills in cutting and joining materials. Pupils build upon this very well to make good progress during Key Stage 1. They acquire a deeper understanding of the working properties of materials, and well-focused design briefs enable them to design and make functional products. For example, pupils made reflectors for their bags and coats and learnt about the importance of staying safe.
- Pupils' progress is variable in Key Stage 2 with some evidence of stronger progress in Year 4. Generally, learning and progress do not build firmly enough upon the strong start they make in Key Stage 1. Systems to monitor pupils' progress are developing but have yet to be implemented. Consequently, pupils make satisfactory progress over time and by Year 6

most reach standards broadly in line with expectations for their age. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included and supported in lessons and make similar progress to their peers.

- Pupils enjoy constructing models and their knowledge of how to stay safe when using equipment, such as scissors and glue guns, is well developed across the school. They listen carefully in lessons and follow instructions.

Quality of teaching in D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is satisfactory.

- Teachers manage lessons safely and activities are well chosen to engage pupils and provide opportunities for them to refine model-making skills. Tasks and activities in the best teaching are purposeful and well planned with a very clear focus on developing specific knowledge, skills and concepts in designing and making. In these lessons, pupils understand what is expected of them because they work to very clear criteria that their products must meet to be successful. For example, Year 4 pupils applied the information gained from their earlier investigations into food labels to develop their prototype chocolate packages. However, the features of the best practice are not shared sufficiently across the team to ensure that all teaching is consistently challenging and builds progressively to extend and deepen pupils' knowledge and skills.
- The use of established strategies such as 'talking pairs' aids pupils' learning and supports the emerging use of reflection and self-assessment. Where teaching was strong, the marking and feedback to pupils were diagnostic and focused on helping pupils to improve. This was not consistent across all classes.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- Teachers' choice of themes provide a broad range of making opportunities and secure focus on acquiring knowledge and basic skills to explore the properties and use of materials to promote pupils' modelling skills. These opportunities work best when pupils also have a specific brief or problem to solve, such as the challenge to children in the Reception class to design and make a device to rescue someone trapped in a tower. However, designing and making to improve products and the focus on meeting user needs is not consistently embedded in curriculum planning.
- The school's curriculum planning of the Early Years Foundation Stage makes an effective contribution to developing children's making and planning skills. Appropriate steps have been taken to increase the focus on developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of mechanisms in Key Stages 1 and 2. Individual projects that pupils plan and make at home with their families are very popular and make a positive contribution to developing their technical and research skills.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

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

- The senior leadership team provides good support to the new subject leader. As a result, she has achieved much in a relatively short period of time through focused monitoring and evaluation. She has tackled some of the gaps in the curriculum, developed useful health and safety guidance and taken steps to clarify and raise teachers' expectations of pupils' designing and making skills.
- Plans to tackle teachers' training needs and the development of systems to support the assessment and regular checks on pupils' progress are well advanced, although they have yet to be implemented throughout the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising achievement by:
 - developing the curriculum to ensure that projects and themes provide a strong focus on purposeful designing and making to solve problems and meet users' needs
 - making greater use of the best practice to ensure consistency in good teaching and pupils' progress across all year groups
 - ensuring that assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress in D&T are embedded across the school.

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