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Dear Mr Harrison

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 25 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; visits to all classes and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is good.

- By the time pupils leave Year 6, their attainment exceeds national expectations. This is because they benefit from good-quality teaching and learning in D&T lessons which enable them to make good progress over time. For example, in a good Year 3 and 4 lesson, pupils used their excellent knowledge of cam wheels to design moving parts for the toys they were planning to make.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's development of formative D&T skills is good. For example, children were able to use their knowledge of joining materials by carefully selecting the appropriate one and explained why it was chosen when making and wrapping their presents.

- The ability to solve problems, work independently and in teams, and to be creative is developing well because teachers are consistently successful in enabling pupils to use their own ideas and plans when designing their products. Consequently, there are many examples around the school of products that are made to a high standard.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitude to their work are always good and in some lessons outstanding. Pupils say how much they enjoy D&T lessons to the extent that, in their opinion, teaching and learning are outstanding.
- More able pupils do not always make the progress they could because they are not sufficiently challenged to produce designs of a higher specification than other pupils.

Quality of teaching in D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is good.

- The lessons observed and pupils' work show that teaching is consistently good across the school and in some lessons it is outstanding.
- The teachers are expert at questioning pupils to develop their ideas and in providing the appropriate length of time needed to enable pupils to solve problems. For example, in an outstanding Year 2 lesson pupils worked extremely hard when making their circus figures based on their designs. One pupil had made an error when constructing the model out of pipe cleaners and dressing it in the clothes she had measured and cut out. The teacher expertly questioned the pupil about the problem. The pupil then independently used her own ideas and solved the problem to her great satisfaction. She was then confident enough to offer her solution to the friends sitting around her.
- Teachers use assessment information well to plan work for different groups of pupils. They check pupils' understanding during the lesson to improve learning. The large majority of pupils make good progress. In some lessons, teachers do not challenge the more able pupils to do as well as they could because the expectations of their designs are not high enough.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- The curriculum for D&T is enriched by good extra-curricular activities, such as the cooking and craft clubs that enable pupils to practise and develop important skills that they need to use in their D&T lessons. Useful partnerships with a local secondary school have enabled pupils to take part in control technology activities.
- There are good links with other subjects so that pupils can apply and practise skills, such as measuring and using their scientific knowledge. Opportunities to link with information and communication technology lessons are less well developed.

- Pupils regularly carry out projects using the full range of materials appropriate to their age. The school has identified that more opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their knowledge and skills using food are needed.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

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

- Leadership by the two D&T coordinators with your effective support has ensured consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. Regular procedures to monitor pupils' work and teachers' planning have enabled the coordinators to lead school-specific staff development and to provide individual support to staff when necessary.
- Visits to each class show that school leaders have been successful in promoting the importance of D&T work and the necessity to strive for high standards. Displays of work in each classroom were of a very high standard.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the challenge for the more able in lessons by:
 - using assessment information about prior performance to make the success criteria for the most able more challenging so that expectations of what they can achieve are raised
 - ensuring that completed designs and products by these pupils are of a higher specification than for others.

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.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's Inspector