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Mrs H Conner  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Conner

**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 January 2012 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.

- On entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage the majority of children demonstrate skill development that is lower than that typical for their age. The school tailors work effectively to accelerate progress so that by the time pupils leave Year 6 their attainment is in line with national expectations. All groups of pupils make good progress. Occasionally, the most able pupils are restricted from making better progress because teaching is too prescriptive.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are excellent. They cooperate very well in groups. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils shared ideas for using an electric circuit as a burglar alarm. They showed respect for each other's ideas regardless of how realistic they were and then came to a consensus about which ones were likely to be the most successful.

- Pupils' creativity, independence and problem-solving skills are well developed. They have a good and appropriate understanding of what constitutes the D&T process. Most pupils demonstrate that they are quite capable of designing and evaluating independently. They also have a good understanding of health and safety. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils demonstrated hygiene rules to the teacher in preparation for making a salsa.

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

The quality of teaching in D&T is good.

- Detailed lesson plans, linked to an effective assessment procedure, result in nearly all pupils making good progress. Work is challenging, interesting and motivating because teachers expertly link it to other curriculum subjects.
- Teachers are particularly good at developing pupils' independence and ensuring that they have ownership of the work by not restricting materials or pupils' pursuit of their own ideas. As one pupil reported, 'We always use our own ideas as long as we don't go over the top'.
- Teachers promote the use of information and communication technology (ICT) well. For example, Year 2 pupils use a computer-aided design program to design their Tudor houses. This is very challenging, but all pupils persevered and successfully completed the design for the front and back of the buildings.
- Teachers prepare useful booklets for all pupils that ensure that all design, making and evaluation steps are taken systematically. This is helpful for most pupils that need this type of structure. However, the most able pupils are slightly restricted from being as creative as they could be. This process does not give them the opportunity to demonstrate that they can take all the planning steps independently and use their own ideas about how to present their designs.

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

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

- The school has a broad and balanced curriculum for design and technology. All programmes of study are taught regularly and pupils have access to an appropriate range of materials.
- Detailed curriculum plans ensure that pupils' skill development is progressive. Meaningful topics are linked extremely well to other subjects of the curriculum. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, pupils were experimenting with pneumatics to design moving parts for the robots they were making. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are learning about the Chinese New Year. They drew pictures of the dragons they wanted to make and then used a variety of materials to construct them. This work linked well to the development of speaking and listening, and writing.

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

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

- Leadership is outstanding because the actions taken have rapidly improved the provision and outcomes for D&T. Expectations of what staff and pupils should achieve are extremely high. Procedures to check the lessons and the work of pupils are thorough and rigorous. Staff are left in no doubt of the improvements they need to make to their teaching of D&T and of the timescale of when this will be expected.
- School leaders have established a very supportive structure for staff that enables them to rise to the challenge outlined above. Curriculum plans are clear and comprehensive. Guidance policies for the thematic curriculum and D&T clearly explain the expectations of what pupils should achieve at different ages and what constitutes good or better teaching in the subject. Leaders identified that teachers were having difficulties pitching work to meet the needs of all groups. Consequently, they devised a very effective assessment document that shows explicitly how to match pupils' work to the National Curriculum levels of attainment. In addition, each teacher has a teaching mentor to support them with their professional development.

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

- ensuring that the most able pupils are able to carry out D&T projects independently and more creatively by lessening the level of prescription.

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

**Tim Bristow**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**