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Mr R O'Sullivan
Headteacher
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Dear Mr O'Sullivan

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: design and technology (D&T)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 7 February 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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is satisfactory.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is satisfactory.

- From very low starting points when they enter the school, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. All groups of pupils are fully included and make progress that is similar to their peers.
- Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress in developing basic skills and are able to choose materials and select tools. However, at times some materials are prepared for them by adults which restricts the opportunities for children to practise their cutting skills. Across Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils' attainment varies. By the time they reach Year 6 their attainment, while improved, remains below average.
- Pupils' attitudes to D&T are positive and they talk enthusiastically about the things that they have made. However, some pupils do not have a clear

understanding of the subject and how to improve their work. Pupils state that they would welcome more opportunities to make things, particularly with wood.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is satisfactory.

- Relationships are positive and pupils are motivated to produce their own models and pieces of work. Teachers are generally confident in their knowledge of the skills that they are trying to develop. Less well developed is their understanding of what typifies each attainment level, particularly at the higher levels and in the design process. Additionally, there is some confusion about what is D&T and what is art and design. Although teaching points are generally clear, the organisation and management in some lessons were overly complex. As a result, pupils occasionally lost interest and their attention drifted.
- Pupils are encouraged to make choices about materials and how they will be used. However, there are times when choice is limited and pupils are over-directed by adults. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to develop older pupils' understanding of computer-aided design (CAD) and to enhance D&T more widely is underdeveloped.
- Questioning is used well to check on pupils' understanding and prior knowledge. Pupils are given good opportunities to discuss their work with their peers and this supports their speaking and listening skills.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children have access to a suitable range of resources to help them to develop their D&T skills. A good range of construction kits is available but these are not always presented to children in an interesting or inviting way.
- Recently, the curriculum has been reviewed so that it is based around 'topics' which make links between subjects. While these often provide a sound context for developing D&T, at times this is not the case. Teachers are not secure in planning learning to ensure that the requirements of the National Curriculum and those of art and design are clear and this results in confusion about which aspect of the subjects are being studied within some topics.
- Opportunities for all Key Stage 2 pupils to learn about and use control technology and resistant materials are insufficiently planned. The school draws upon national guidance to ensure that pupils experience a range of different contexts to design and make, although the range of materials used is relatively narrow. In contrast to this, the opportunities for pupils to learn about food and ingredients are a relative strength. Products are used as useful starting points to inspire pupils' own designs. For example, pupils designed their own bottle insulators following their investigation of a range

of similar products. D&T is used well as the basis for developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. However, opportunities are missed to use D&T activities to extend pupils vocabulary, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- A particular strength is the use of homework challenges which often result in pupils and their parents or carers working together to make models which are then celebrated in school.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are satisfactory.

- Senior staff have a clear view of the strengths and relative weaknesses in D&T. The subject leader is enthusiastic and is beginning to provide direction and leadership. Together with the curriculum team she has ensured that the development of D&T is part of the school's long-term plan.
- Annual pupil reports mention D&T and art combined. Pupils' attainment in relation to what is expected at the end of each year is reported to parents and carers. However, the use of this information is underdeveloped in terms of informing senior leaders about school-wide attainment and progress and in identifying areas for development.
- The subject leader's skills in evaluating attainment and progress and the link to provision, including the quality of teaching and the curriculum are underdeveloped.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving teachers' knowledge and skills so that they understand the nature of D&T and how it is different to art and design and the requirements of each National Curriculum level
- improving opportunities for using ICT in D&T, including the use of CAD packages.

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

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector