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9 March 2012

Ms S Denning
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Denning

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 students, during my visit on 21 and 22 February 2012 to look at work in D&T. Please pass on my thanks to the students and staff and the gentlemen participating in the 'Mister Chef' programme; they helped to make the visit very enjoyable and extremely useful.

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 the community cooking programme and of 15 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is good.

- Attainment is above average. Students develop ideas effectively and are able to produce highly creative and imaginative designs. They are able to explore a range of materials including smart materials and demonstrate a good understanding of CAD/CAM.
- Their communication skills are very well developed with some students in Year 8 able to produce highly sophisticated design drawings. Students' rates of progress are improving further as they enjoy the freedom to create their own work, develop manufacturing skills and work with independence.

- The department's ethos has instilled in students a desire for success and to learn more about D&T. They have a clear understanding of its value in society and in their own lives.

Quality of teaching in D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is good.

- Teachers are passionate and have a strong knowledge of their subjects. They understand technological developments and bring this up-to-date knowledge into their lessons.
- Teachers know the students well and have very positive relationships with them. This ensures that students feel safe in the department and are willing to explore ideas and be adventurous in creating and developing ideas. Where learning is most successful, teachers provide personalised short-term steps for success for students. Although this occurs regularly there is still scope for even greater impact through the insistence of even higher standards, particularly in ensuring the quality of finish in product manufacturing.
- Teachers use progress monitoring data with increasing impact and accurate assessments are increasingly being used to challenge students. This is not yet a systematic element of all teachers' planning. Lessons do, however, ensure that all students are able to engage with meaningful activities regardless of background, ability or special educational needs and/or disability.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- High-quality opportunities for students to develop understanding and creativity are well developed. An example of this is the excellent 'Mister Chef' community programme. This is successful on many levels. Gentlemen from the local community, that have had limited experience of cooking for themselves, learn to cook a wide range of recipes. They are supported by volunteer students that are not only excellent ambassadors for the school but also for youth. With empathy and courtesy they, and the school staff, support the gentlemen to make high-quality food products from a range of cultures. This inter-generational experience allows students to develop a real understanding of others' needs and is an exceptional experiential learning event.
- Opportunities for cross-curricular work are used to broaden the understanding of D&T and problem-solving skills. Competitions such as the 'Marine Challenge' have helped to ensure that students are able to work with experts from outside the school as well as working and competing with other schools.
- Provision for students in Years 7 and 8 ensures a firm foundation for their future learning. Years 10 and 11 students enjoy engineering lessons and

the high level of concentration and quantity of work they complete in these extended lessons helps to prepare them for the demands of work.

- The number of students who choose to study GCSE courses in the department is increasing as a result of changes to the school curriculum to enable students to undertake a further GCSE in Year 11.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

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

- The head of department has ensured that there is a clear direction and drive for further development. Consequently, staff are committed to improving the opportunities for students such as developing their knowledge of smart materials. They have been very successful in developing a more creative approach and students are more imaginative and innovative in the products they design and make. Teaching is developing as a result of better planning that is focused on accelerating students' progress. However, this is not embedded so that all students, especially the most able, are challenged in every task and have a clear understanding of their next steps
- There is strong support for the department at all levels. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the positive experience and different approach that D&T can bring to students. They seek to cultivate students' passion and provide opportunities to broaden their experience.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing progress further and ensuring that more students achieve the higher grades by:
 - refining teaching to ensure that all students are appropriately challenged by the tasks and have a clear understanding of the next steps for learning
 - improving students' manufacturing skills to enable them to consistently achieve a higher quality of finished products.

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

Paul Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector