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Mr A Sohatski
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Dear Mr Sohatski

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 28 and 29 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of 12 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is inadequate.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is inadequate.

- Given their starting points, students' attainment and progress overall in D&T are low. This has been the case for a number of years. Some students achieve well in all key stages including in the sixth form. Students' progress is improving at Key Stage 4 as a result of closer monitoring and support from the senior leaders, and Year 11 students are on track for improved GCSE grades in 2012. However, improvements are fragile and inconsistent.
- Learning and progress in D&T are enhanced by the positive behaviour and attitudes of students. Students work hard and engage in the learning very

well, showing commitment to their studies and a desire to succeed. They willingly take on ideas and engage in the tasks that they are asked to complete but the tasks do not always allow them to make the progress that they are capable of. Although the monitoring of students' progress is improving, teachers' assessments lack precision. Data are not yet accurate enough to give a clear picture of progress from the time students start in the school to the end of Key Stage 4.

Quality of teaching in D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is inadequate.

- Teaching does not secure satisfactory progress overall because lessons are not sufficiently focused on students' individual needs and teachers' expectations with regard to students' achievement are not high enough. Consequently, the work provided for many students is not sufficiently challenging. The purpose of lessons is not always articulated clearly enough to students through the learning objectives used.
- Teachers' knowledge of the materials and processes of D&T is strong. Students relish the opportunities to develop their own creative work. The most effective teaching demonstrated clear, focused questioning of individuals or small groups, promoting individuals to think deeper and to understand their next steps for learning. However, too much of the learning time in the lessons seen was dominated by teachers talking, leaving little time for students to undertake the work.
- Teachers do not always make sufficient use of opportunities during lessons to identify the small steps in progress that students make, or use this information effectively to plan future learning.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

The quality of the curriculum in D&T is satisfactory

- The curriculum provides appropriate opportunities to develop creative and innovative products, particularly in resistant materials. This, together with enrichment activities, enhances students' engagement and promotes their enjoyment of D&T.
- Established schemes of work are focused firmly on developing skills, knowledge and understanding in a range of materials and processes. Students' awareness of other cultures, healthy living, and the sustainability of products are promoted. Students' skills in applying computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) are beginning to develop as a result of more attention given to this in curriculum plans.
- Good arrangements ensure that the very small groups of students who chose to continue their study of D&T in the sixth form can do so.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

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

- The subject leader's hard work over time has engaged students well in D&T. However, students' progress is not rapid enough and has not secured attainment in line with their capabilities.
- Developments have not focused sufficiently on improving the quality of teaching and students' progress. Expectations are too low because students' prior knowledge and skills on entry to D&T are not identified clearly and the work they are given is pitched too low.
- The school is aware of the need to improve the department's work and has plans to bring about more rapid improvements. The senior team is currently supporting the department well to ensure that key priorities for development are tackled. This support is effective and reflected in generous staffing levels to promote students' learning in GCSE and A-level groups.
- The subject leader has a clear vision and ambition for the future of D&T. This vision is well founded and some medium-term priorities have been identified. However, an appropriate plan to improve the consistency of teaching and to increase the rate of students' progress has not been implemented securely to ensure quick and sustained improvement. While firm plans are in place to improve accommodation in the department, including the development of two new food rooms, accommodation and facilities are, in parts of the department, poorly organised to support learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- following a clear development plan that has measurable short-term goals relating to the key priorities for improvement
- increasing attainment significantly and making sure students' progress is good by developing teaching which ensures that:
 - learning objectives for individuals are clear, challenging and based on accurate assessment of students' prior achievements.
 - assessment is used during lessons to inform the teaching
- securing precision and accuracy of assessment to inform planning and monitoring of students' progress
- ensuring that the accommodation and facilities are efficiently organised to support learning.

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