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Miss M McManus  
Headteacher  
Birches Green Junior School  
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Dear Miss McManus

**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 21 March 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 good.

**Achievement in D&T**

Achievement in D&T is good.

- Nearly all pupils attain the expected level by the end of Year 6 and many exceed this expectation. This is because all groups of pupils make more rapid progress over time than is seen typically.
- Pupils' creativity, independence and perseverance are developing well. They have good age-appropriate understanding of D&T processes. Most pupils demonstrate that they are capable of designing and evaluating independently. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils examined their shelters to identify the necessary improvements needed to ensure that they met the agreed success criteria for their products. When using some materials, such as food or textiles, the quality of the finish for a few pupils is less strong than their work with other materials, such as resistant materials.

- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good. They cooperate very well in groups. Their speaking and listening skills are developing well in part as a result of their work in D&T. For example, in a Year 3 lesson where pupils were examining the stability of structures, they gave thoughtful and articulate answers to explain why some structures were more stable than others.

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

The quality of teaching in D&T is good.

- School evaluation records, pupils' work and assessment information show that over time pupils benefit from good teaching overall, resulting in good achievement.
- A strong feature of teaching is the consistency of approach to the D&T process. All stages of design and making are given the appropriate attention. This results in independent and cooperative pupils being well-motivated and equipped to complete projects to a good standard.
- Assessment information is used particularly well to present personalised and challenging activities to different groups of pupils. There is also effective support for pupils who find these practical activities difficult. For example, in lessons teaching assistants effectively balance support while maintaining the independence that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs require so that they make progress that is similar to their peers.

### **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 D&T. All programmes of study are taught regularly and pupils have access to an appropriate range of materials. Curriculum planning to develop pupils' practical skills when using textiles and food is less well developed than planning for resistant materials or mechanics such as pneumatics.
- A major strength of the curriculum is the many enrichment opportunities it presents pupils to broaden their horizons. For example, on a recent residential visit pupils were able to design and make large shelters as part of a D&T project.
- Effective links are established with other subjects, such as mathematics and English. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, pupils accurately measured and cut out a template for their money bags, demonstrating the application of their measuring skills.
- The use of information and communication technology is a regular and effective feature of D&T lessons. For example, Year 5 pupils had used the internet successfully to research healthy snack bars when designing their own healthy product.

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

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

- Senior leaders demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of D&T. There is good subject expertise. The coordinator for D&T has been effective in improving the provision and the outcomes for pupils in the last two years. Monitoring and evaluation have had a clear impact in strengthening the quality of teaching.

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

- providing more regular opportunities for pupils to further develop their skills when working with textiles or food.

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**