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Mr D Mountney
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Mountney

Ofsted 2012–13 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 9 and 10 May 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 10 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is good.

- Trends in students' attainment in D&T are improving so that by the end of Key Stage 4 in 2011 students attained slightly better than the national average. Data this year indicate that students are on track to do even better.
- All students make at least good progress and some make exceptional progress. This is because of the focus on improving students' understanding of how to be successful, coupled with robust monitoring systems that swiftly indicate if a student is not meeting their challenging targets. Carefully tailored interventions support students in achieving their targets.

Quality of teaching in D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is good.

- Teachers use their good understanding of the subject to provide a high-quality learning environment. The school has produced a wide range of video clips on production techniques and equipment which provides useful quick references for students to use independently. The good use of assessment information by students is a strong feature of their independent learning and enables them to plan their next steps effectively.
- Teachers' planning provides well-considered differentiation to all groups of students. Questioning that enables all students to think more deeply about their work is well matched to their needs. Students enjoy D&T and have a good knowledge of materials and processes. Students are justly proud of their work but commented on the lack of computer-aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM) opportunities for modern manufacture. Inspection evidence supports this view.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets students' needs well. Good links are formed with other schools and local businesses which promote students' learning of designing and making and enables them to apply their knowledge of manufacturing techniques. The lack of CAD/CAM opportunities restricts the innovation of creative solutions in resistant materials.
- Progression across the material areas in Key Stage 3 is good. This prepares students for work in Key Stage 4 through real contexts for designing and making.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

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

- The faculty leader has a high level of subject expertise and vision which has developed staff confidence and team spirit. He is supported effectively through robust line management. Systems for sharing good practice have enabled staff to take the initiative with developing teaching and learning.
- Health and safety procedures are secure and enable students to confidently apply their knowledge and understanding through a broad range of contexts.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the achievement of all students through the use of CAD hardware and software to replicate modern industrial techniques.

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.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker
Her Majesty's Inspector