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Ms R Williamson
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Williamson

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 27 and 28 June 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 including two learning walks.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is satisfactory.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is satisfactory.

- Students' attainment at Key Stage 4 is below the national average but improving across all courses. From their starting points on entry to the school most students make satisfactory progress. Students make swifter progress in food at both key stages and their attainment in GCSE Catering is above the national average. Some groups of students make slower progress than others and actions to tackle this are developing. Students' achievement in AS and A Level courses is broadly in line with the average nationally.
- By the end of Key Stage 4, students are increasingly able to sketch and use computer-aided design to communicate their ideas. Many have developed the technical skills to create original and functional products. This is consolidated further for the small number of students who continue

into the sixth form. Generally students' ability to plan, test and evaluate the products they make and to critically analyse those invented by other people are less strongly developed.

- Most students enjoy designing and making and are increasingly acquiring the specialist vocabulary to discuss their ideas. They apply safe working practices and understand the importance of doing so. Their independence is well demonstrated in food technology.

Quality of teaching in D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is satisfactory.

- Teachers consistently manage lessons safely and deploy support staff effectively. In the best lessons learning is planned expertly. Teachers' explanations and demonstrations are clear and timely. In these lessons students make swift progress. Their attitudes to learning are first class; they ask questions, take an active role in the lessons, and respond effectively to well-planned opportunities to demonstrate responsibility. In the weaker lessons students are sometimes unclear about what they are learning. Their work and their understanding of it are not monitored carefully enough and opportunities were missed to intervene to tackle students' misconceptions. Where lessons had these shortcomings students' progress slowed and teachers worked hard to maintain students' behaviour and interest.
- Students know their targets and are keen to achieve them. The whole-school literacy policy is consistently implemented and feedback to students is appropriately focused on the next steps in their projects and how to improve their use of subject vocabulary.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- Schemes of work at Key Stage 3 provide breadth to students' work although what students must learn is not always as clear as what they are expected to do. Developments to the Key Stage 4 schemes of work provide scope for more creative and technical rigour to the products that students' make. New courses, such as catering, have brought greater success in students' enjoyment and achievement. However, opportunities for students to design and make to solve real problems and to work with real clients are limited at all key stages.
- Extra-curricular opportunities, including staying after school to use workshops and other facilities, contribute well to students' learning and are appreciated by them.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

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

- The department is led well by a knowledgeable subject leader. The challenge and vision for improvement are firmly demonstrated in the professional development she provides to modernise the curriculum and to share good teaching practice. Procedures are in place to support assessment and to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.
- Plans are appropriately focused on improving learning and bringing greater coherence to schemes of work. Actions to improve students' literacy skills and the consistency of assessment and feedback are developing effectively.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising attainment and improving students' learning and progress by:
 - improving the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that schemes of work include clear objectives, focused on what students will know, understand and be able to do
 - ensuring that all teachers monitor students' learning effectively during lessons and intervene where necessary to accelerate their progress
- improving the curriculum to ensure that all students have opportunities to design and make to solve real problems and work with real clients.

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

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector