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4 July 2012

Mr J Banks
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Banks

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 21 and 22 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 11 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is satisfactory.

- Students' attainment is improving quickly for those currently in Years 10 and Year 11. Most students make satisfactory progress and some make good progress from their starting points on entry to the school. Students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make equal progress to their peers due to the adaptations made to the curriculum and the finely focused teaching and specialist support they receive in lessons. However, more able students do not achieve as well as they should and actions to tackle this are developing.
- Students' knowledge of current technologies and their technical skills, particularly in electronics, systems and control, are developing securely. However, their understanding of where materials and food ingredients

come from and industrial processes are relatively weaker aspects in Key Stage 3.

- Students work safely with complex machinery. They derive much enjoyment from seeing their ideas take shape and the steadily improving professional quality of their work. Their enjoyment is also well reflected in the high proportion of students who choose to continue to study D&T at Key Stage 4.

Quality of teaching in D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is good.

- Teachers' safe management of lessons, very good subject knowledge, and the breadth and range of the teaching methods they use are good features across all lessons. The school's behaviour strategies are consistently and expertly applied.
- In the best lessons students know what they are learning and they know what good progress means because teachers make this clear. For example, in a Year 8 lesson students knew and understood the criteria for the biscuits they made, knew how to implement quality control and testing procedures and understood how to demonstrate a high level of responsibility. In such lessons teachers monitored learning carefully and adapted what they planned to ensure that all students made swift progress.
- Students' progress slows when learning is not clear or monitored as carefully. In these instances, teachers' assessment of what students achieved and where individuals struggled was not defined sharply enough. On occasion further work for more able students who finished quickly was not always planned, and opportunities were missed to enable them to work to more demanding criteria, or to extend their planning and evaluation skills by applying them to different contexts.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- Developments to the curriculum have ensured that it is adapted to meet the needs and interests of most groups of students. The introduction of grouping by ability, provision of nurture sessions to support students with low levels of literacy, and the use of focused mentoring support for specific students in Key Stage 4 has helped to accelerate their progress. Technology activity days and the regular Saturday D&T club enrich students' learning and particularly their technical knowledge and skills in using resources such as computer-aided design and workshop equipment.
- A consistent emphasis on creative and innovative designing and making is established across all key stages. Opportunities to develop students' learning and challenge them further by applying their skills to solve real problems and to work with real clients are underdeveloped.

- Schemes of work demonstrate, often in great detail, what students should do but do not always show clearly enough what they have to learn.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

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

- The subject leader has established a strong team of staff who share his passion and the school's vision for the subject. A strategic approach to training has helped staff to develop their specialist expertise and hone their teaching skills. The impact of this on enriching and deepening students' learning is evident in their progress and the high quality of their work.
- Leaders have acted swiftly to tackle underachievement. Students' progress and the quality of teaching and learning are monitored effectively. Accurate and incisive evaluation informs improvement plans. Investment in new technology and processes are contributing effectively to students' learning and are used well to deepen students' knowledge and skills.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving achievement for all groups of students by:
 - clearly defining in the schemes of work what students are expected to learn so that all teachers plan and assess students' progress in lessons precisely
 - ensuring greater challenge in the curriculum by providing opportunities for students to design, make and innovate 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