

26 January 2007

Mrs C Weir
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Weir

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 25 January 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in D&T are satisfactory overall.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons and standards are in line with national curriculum expectations for their age.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and those who are at an early stage in acquiring English make satisfactory progress and achieve well in D&T.
- Pupils develop satisfactory making skills by Year 6; pupils' cutting and sewing of slippers including their use of sewing machines is neat and fasten materials together quite robustly. However, such accuracy is inconsistent, for example when other materials are used, such as cam mechanisms on wooden moving toys, they do not work well because of inaccuracies in pupils' measuring and cutting skills.

- Pupils listen attentively and follow instructions well but they have few opportunities to plan their work or regularly test the products they make and consequently such skills are under developed.
- Pupils' personal development is good. Their attitudes and behaviour in D&T are good and they know and follow health and safety rules very well. Teacher and pupil relationships are good. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well promoted in the activities. In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 pupils discuss and explain confidently what they are making and some higher attaining pupils offer reasoned explanations for their choice of resources and construction styles. Older pupils evaluate their work satisfactorily and identify improvements in its construction.
- Pupils enjoy and are engaged by the designing and making activities and recall what they have learnt well. Pupils' use of subject vocabulary is developing; they recognise and use technical language but do not always recognise key words, such as design brief and cam.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in D&T is satisfactory.

- Stronger features seen in lessons and teachers' planning include: good class management and organisation, a logical sequence to lessons and good levels of resource. Effective deployment of support staff promotes adequate supervision of activities and they help pupils with LDD to make satisfactory progress.
- Good examples of questioning were noted in some lessons but practice is varied in and across Key Stages. This good practice could usefully be shared more widely.
- Learning in a Year 5 and Year 6 lesson was well structured: pupils knew what was required to produce a good slipper and referred to the criteria the teacher had shared with them to inform their designing and making. A weaker feature in lessons was an inconsistent use of detailed lesson objectives to explain the purpose of the lesson and what pupils were expected to learn. Consequently this does not help teachers to evaluate sufficiently what pupils have learnt by the end of the lesson or to inform the planning of subsequent lessons to progressively move learning on.
- Pupils receive praise about their work but it is not regularly assessed and they have too little feedback about the quality of it or how to improve it.
- A weaker feature of teaching was a lack of challenge to push more able pupils' learning on and to promote their understanding of more complex concepts and skills.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the D&T curriculum is satisfactory.

- Approaches to planning units of work and the content of lesson activities are based upon the use of national guidance. The scheme of work meets statutory requirements.

- Pupils have many opportunities to work with food. They develop food preparation skills and a general awareness of healthy eating messages. However care also needs to be given to ensure a better balance between the biscuits, pizzas and cakes they make and healthier foods.
- The curriculum is enriched with visits and activities. The uniqueness of D&T is not specifically defined and some activities currently blur the distinctions so that pupils, and staff, confuse art and D&T.
- Older pupils have contact with designers and engage in exciting activities such as scrap heap challenges. They are developing an awareness of the application of D&T in life and how designers make use of modern tools such as computer aided design to help them design and make products.

Leadership and management of D&T

The leadership and management of D&T are satisfactory.

- Self-evaluation accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses although the latter have yet to be tackled or included in school improvement planning.
- Teachers know the units they are teaching well but further work to develop their understanding of progression in D&T might usefully be employed to improve lesson planning and preparation for assessment.
- Resources and accommodation are adequate.

Inclusion

- Pupils with LDD and pupils who are recently arrived in the country and are at early stages of acquiring English are well supported in lessons through the additional help they receive from teaching assistants.
- Pupils support and help each other in lessons. Some work effectively together and act as interpreters for pupils with less advanced English.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- clarify teachers' understanding of progression in D&T and develop a shared view of the uniqueness of the subject across the teaching team
- eliminate inconsistencies in the use of lesson objectives to identify what pupils have learned and where gaps remain; use the information to inform the planning of subsequent lessons to challenge all pupils and to progressively move learning on
- ensure all feedback and marking of pupils' work promotes improvement.
- ensure greater consistency in teaching pupils to work accurately and to recognise key words in D&T.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop D&T in the school.

A copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector