

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



12 June 2007

Mrs D Butler
Headteacher
Rothbury First School
Rothbury
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE65 7PG

Dear Mrs Butler

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on Tuesday 22 May 2007 to look at work in Design and Technology (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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

Design and Technology

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards in D&T are satisfactory.

- Pupils make good progress, many from a lower starting point than normally found, and standards are satisfactory overall. In the reception class, they use construction kits skilfully to design and make models of fire engines, rockets and roundabouts. Design skills are well applied for example when planning and evaluating a farmyard.

- Pupils use equipment, tools and materials well by the end of Year 2. They creatively design good quality products such as glove puppets and talk with significant pride about their work.
- By the time they leave school at the end of Year 4, pupils rigorously evaluate products they have designed and made such as Greek tragedy masks. They speak positively about the subject and are enthusiastic about the challenges the subject presents. Pupils are particularly realistic about what they imagine ideas to look like in the planning stages and the problems faced when making a real product.

Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

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

- Teaching is well balanced between pupils finding out for themselves and being taught D&T knowledge and skills. Good teaching is making sure pupils are able to understand what they need to do when designing and making products.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and pupils talk confidently about the use of specific tools and techniques. Pupils' knowledge of systems and control is less well embedded.
- The school acknowledges assessment practice is the next area for development in D&T and is planning to help pupils know more fully how well they are doing and guide learning more effectively.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is meeting the needs and interest of learners well. An effective curriculum structure uses QCA units in conjunction with topic work. This ensures activities keep pupils interested and using a variety of components and materials.
- The rate of progress from year to year has improved as a result of using the QCA units to guide the work. Subject knowledge could be further extended by increasing opportunities to learn in more depth about mechanisms and electronic control systems.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of D&T are good.

- The school's leadership and management capacity to ensure D&T can move forward are good. As a result, planning and schemes of work are improving.
- The school accurately evaluates the subject strengths and areas for development. It is realistic about what can be achieved in a small three teacher first school alongside other priorities for development.

Inclusion

Provision in D&T for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. All pupils including boys and girls are equally involved in the subject.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- assessment systems to help pupils know more fully how well they are doing and guide learning more effectively
- further extending subject knowledge by increasing opportunities to learn in more depth about mechanisms and electronic control systems.

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

Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector