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Mrs James
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs James

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 May 2007 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons

Design and Technology

The overall effectiveness of design and technology was judged to be satisfactory and improving with some good features.

Achievement and standards

Pupils enter the school with standards below national expectations in D&T. Attainment in D&T is average by the end of Year 6. Thus pupils make good progress.

- Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are low when they enter school. The well planned work in the foundation stage which has an appropriate focus on developing pupils' manipulative skills provides a firm foundation for D&T.
- Mixed ability classes are used effectively to help all pupils strive for a high standard of work. Group work enables pupils to help each other. Thus pupils develop confidence in themselves as effective

learners. Pupils are encouraged to explain their ideas both in written work and orally. This helps pupils to make good progress and to attain in line with national expectations by the end of Year 6.

- Well structured planning ensures that all pupils are clear about how to progress their work. The school's focus on improving writing has been well developed in both Key Stages in D&T. Opportunities are provided for pupils to carry out extended writing tasks that complement D&T activities well.
- Effective support to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language (EAL) ensures that they make good progress.

Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

The quality of teaching and learning in design and technology is good.

- All pupils enjoy D&T and this was a reflection of the lively and engaging way in which teachers taught. Pupils explained that they liked D&T because they could be 'messy' and make things. One girl said she liked D&T because she did not have the opportunity to make things at home. Relationships were very good. Pupils were confident to express their ideas and keen to answer questions. Praise was used judiciously and as a consequence pupils felt valued when they had tried their best.
- Lesson planning is effective and learning objectives are clearly presented. A wide range of differentiation strategies are deployed well ensuring that all pupils understand the work and engage in tasks with confidence.
- Clear expectations are made of teaching assistants and they effectively support both individual pupils and groups. This helps pupils to develop their thinking and understanding of problems.
- Teachers use questioning well and this also develops pupils' thinking. Pupils are encouraged to use technical language correctly and to explain their work. However, marking is inconsistent and does not always explain what pupils have done well and how they can improve their work.
- Teachers have the flexibility to plan when they wish to teach D&T. This allows them to maximise the opportunities in the time table and enables them to link D&T to other subjects as appropriate.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in design and technology is satisfactory.

- The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work are appropriately used. They form a broad and balanced basis for planning in D&T. Teachers are beginning to have the confidence to alter and develop them to suit the needs of pupils better. At present

there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to explore and think about D&T in other cultures and from other times.

- Teachers are unclear about the levels pupils are working towards and whether the units of work give sufficient challenge to higher attaining pupils. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to work to design specifications to allow them to evaluate their work against the criteria.
- Pupils making capabilities are developed systematically through the D&T booklets. However, designing is weaker and does not sufficiently challenge higher attaining pupils in their thinking. Good cross curricular links are identified and exploited well. Links to science in particular are strong and have helped pupils to understand how science principles underpin designing and making in D&T.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of design and technology are satisfactory and improving.

- The D&T coordinator has a strong vision and enthusiasm for the subject. At present there has been insufficient time for many of his ideas to have an impact on the quality of D&T. He has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development. These have been appropriately addressed in the subject action plan. He has used his experience of coordinating science and physical education to develop his role within D&T. This knowledge has ensured that cross curricular links are identified and developed in all schemes of work.
- In the short time you have been at the school you have been very proactive in driving through improvements. In particular you have enhanced the learning environment for all pupils. The addition of a food room, which is soon to go into use, has provided an excellent area for pupils to develop their understanding of food technology. The opportunity to work in a dedicated food room is rare in primary schools. It will allow the good work in food to be extended through pupils being able to prepare and cook dishes themselves.

Inclusion

- Inclusion is good because the school identifies accurately the needs of pupils and puts in place appropriate support structures. As a result the pupils who arrive in the middle of the school year are quickly assessed and appropriate support is provided. The school uses mentors effectively and is actively seeking further funding to ensure that those pupils who are often in the school for a short time before leaving, are helped to maximise their learning.
- There are no differences in the achievement of boys and girls and those from different minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils with learning disabilities and/or difficulties make similar progress when compared with others. This is because of the wide range of differentiation and

good support in lessons. Teachers recognise that although some pupils have low levels of literacy and numeracy they still succeed in D&T if appropriate support is in place. Small mixed ability groups are used effectively to this end.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- use specifications when designing in order to support all pupils in making evaluations
- ensure that marking clearly identifies what pupils have done well and what they need to do to improve
- ensure that all units of work are mapped against National Curriculum levels so that higher attaining pupils are appropriately challenged.

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

Michelle Parker
Her Majesty's Inspector