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Mrs A Smith
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Dear Mr Smith

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 November 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

Provision for D&T is satisfactory overall with some good features.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout the school.

- Children get off to a sound start in the foundation unit. They begin with below average prior attainment and make satisfactory progress through a wide range of exploratory and constructional activities related to D&T.
- Progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 is sound and pupils develop a satisfactory level of D&T capability, across a full spectrum of the subject. This is aided by the use throughout the school of units from

the model scheme of work developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

- The standard of attainment in the lessons seen, whilst below national norms, reflected the sound progress pupils make from their low starting points when they join the school. They benefit from good level of adult supervision in the classrooms. This is especially useful in keeping pupils engaged in their practical designing and making projects, and behaving safely and sensibly. The staff also help pupils develop speaking and listening skills as they discuss their practical work.
- The pupils clearly enjoy this subject and the opportunity it gives them to develop their own ideas. They report that they prefer making to designing. Designing is at its best when teachers use a range of interesting methods to stimulate pupils to think.
- Craft skills developed in the knitting club and the various healthy cooking activities are very good, benefiting from the good resourcing and the intensive tuition provided.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good features.

- In the lessons seen, the general teaching skills were good. Staff go to some lengths to secure pupils' good behaviour, concentration and attention to detail as they work. This is well supported by a good adult to pupil ratio.
- Over the years, the coordinators have produced some good portfolios of the pupils' D&T work which are useful in helping class teachers to plan and assess pupils' D&T capability. These could profitably be extended to cover the full range of the subject.
- Effective use is made of a variety of adults other than teachers to help pupils learn aspects of design and technology.
- There is a need for staff training which develops teachers' technical skills and knowledge and also their capacity to teach these in D&T.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum for D&T is satisfactory.

- There are well developed plans to improve the content of the curriculum and the consistency of teaching.
- A detailed and coherent policy exists and has just been revised. It is well in tune with National Curriculum requirements.
- The school has rightly decided to reduce the number of QCA teaching units taught from three to two per term in order to improve the rigour of coverage.

- The pupils see much relevance to their future lives in the practical learning which takes place in D&T.
- Plans for curriculum development are good but the school now needs time and sustained effort to implement them in full.

Quality of Leadership and management

Leadership and management of D&T are satisfactory with some good features.

- D&T has been properly provided for over the years by the school's supportive senior leaders.
- The previous two coordinators clearly benefited from attending extended and external training courses which enabled them to develop a coherent curriculum.
- The new coordinator is efficient and enthusiastic. She has developed good outline plans to improve provision and time is now needed to put them into practice. The school has brought in expert support from the local authority in this endeavour.
- Resourcing is very good and well managed. The accommodation is spacious and there are good facilities for all aspects of D&T. The food room is excellent and used very productively.

Inclusion

Inclusion within D&T is good. Pupils of varying abilities are set tasks and given teaching well suited to their needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include to:

- raise standards by improving the coherence of the curriculum and the pupils' opportunities to learn and apply skills in a progressive way
- develop ways of enabling pupils to apply the good craft skills they learn in, for example the knitting club and the various healthy cooking sessions, in mainstream D&T project work
- develop the overall level of D&T capability, and the capacity to teach it well, amongst all teachers and their assistants
- develop pupil assessment and curriculum monitoring procedures better to support the school's intention to develop good D&T provision throughout the age range.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop design and technology in the school.

A copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Peter Toft HMI
Ofsted Subject Adviser for D&T