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Mrs J McKenna
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs McKenna

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 3 December 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 quality of provision for D&T is good overall, with some excellent features. The school's capacity to improve this further is excellent.

Achievements and Standards

Achievements and standards in D&T are good, with some excellent features.

- By the end of Year 6 standards are above average across a wide range of this subject.
- Pupils recognise the value of considering need in detail when designing products and planning to make them. They develop a good understanding of the idea of function.

- The work carried out is rigorous and, for example, pupils develop good technical graphics skills in Years 5 and 6. In the lessons seen throughout the age range they were taught to use very good technical vocabulary.
- Their work within D&T reinforces their learning in other subjects, for example, in the use of measurement and weighing in mathematics.
- Pupils make consistent progress throughout the school. All of the teachers seen follow the comprehensive scheme of work well.
- Pupils have ample scope to engage in creative designing in the well managed projects they carry out. They also have good opportunities to make functioning products in a wide range of media, although the use of computers for designing and in control is less well developed than other aspects of D&T.
- Boys and girls achieve well, though in the older classes the girls tend to take more care in their practical work than the boys.

Quality of Teaching and Learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers have good levels of general teaching competence and are conscientious in their planning and managing of projects and lessons.
- These teaching skills are well enhanced by the fluent use of interactive whiteboards.
- Teachers have developed strong technical expertise in order to teach the units of work to a good depth. Some effective training has been received within the local authority and staff have supplemented this through their own enquiries beyond the school into good practice in D&T.
- The mixed ability classes are carefully taught and managed to secure good learning among pupils of all abilities.
- The pupils response to D&T is very enthusiastic. They enjoy the subject considerably, behave very well and have very good relationships with staff and each other. They recognise the value of overcoming difficult problems and develop very good perseverance.

Quality of Curriculum

The quality of the D&T curriculum is good throughout the school.

- After a broad experience in the use of materials in the nursery and reception classes, pupils are taught a wide range of units mainly selected from the national scheme of work produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.
- The school has developed some interesting additional units and plans to do more of this, especially to develop for pupils closer links between subjects.
- The pupils spoken to see much relevance in D&T for their future lives, both in work and at home.
- Computer aided designing and control are underdeveloped.

Quality of Leadership and Management

D&T is well led and managed throughout the school.

- Senior staff are enthusiastic about the value of D&T within a broad and balanced curriculum. They ensure that the subject has a secure place in the curriculum.
- Subject coordination is very effective. Both the previous coordinator and the current one have strong ambitions to develop the subject further. The school has excellent capacity to bring this improvement about.
- The school's self evaluation is evidence based, clear and accurate. The subject's strengths and areas for development are clearly identified.
- Teaching assistants are very well deployed to support pupils learning in D&T.

Inclusion

D&T is taught in an inclusive way and all groups of pupils make good progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- in developing the D&T curriculum, investigate the various sources of information on modern D&T projects available on websites
- develop the use of computer aided designing and computer control.

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

Peter Toft HMI
Ofsted Subject Adviser for D&T