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Mr A Murray
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Murray

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 24 January 2008 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T was judged to be satisfactory, confirming your self evaluation.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in D&T are satisfactory.

- Pupils start at the school with below average capabilities in D&T. They achieve well and standards are average by the end of Year 6. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of how to design and make models is secure, skills linked to the application of mechanisms, pneumatics and other control systems are less well advanced.
- The development of presentation and research skills using computers at an early age is a feature of the work together with a sound range of D&T activities. Pupils in Year 6 capably evaluate products they have designed and made such as slippers and models of Greek vases.
- Pupils enjoy D&T and talk with enthusiasm about the chance to engage in practical work.

Quality of teaching and learning

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

- Lessons are well planned using limited D&T resources to good effect. Learning is effectively managed between making sure pupils know what they have to do when designing, and letting them explore creative ideas and ways forward with their project work.
- Sound individual guidance is provided to help pupils improve their work. Individual performance on projects is numerically marked and National Curriculum levels are awarded at the end of each year. The tracking of performance in D&T is a new venture the school is planning to introduce for all foundation subjects.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The D&T curriculum is part of the school's overall policy and Catholic ethos. QCA units are aligned with other subject work to compensate for the smaller time allocation than usually found.
- The rate of progress from year to year has been improved through the use of QCA national scheme of work. Pupils find the projects interesting and relevant. Learning D&T skills from year to year is not continuous across all aspects of the subject and the school knows it is an area to coordinate in the future.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of D&T are satisfactory.

- The school accurately evaluates subject performance to be satisfactory. Teachers have a satisfactory understanding of the subject and work closely together as a team to make sure pupils are effectively supported from their wide starting points.

Inclusion

The achievements of all groups of pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are similar and girls do equally as well as boys.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- extending pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding of tools, systems and control
- developing strategies to provide more continuity in pupils learning from year to year.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your Local Authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector