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Mr M Moore
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Dear Mr Moore

Ofsted survey inspection programme - Design and Technology (D&T)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit, on 28 - 29 April 2008 to look at work in Design & 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of seven lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Attainment and achievement in D&T are outstanding.

- Students enter the school broadly at national expectation although the school could do more to identify their starting points in relation to D&T. Students make good progress and by the end of Key Stage 3 their standards are well above average. Almost all students follow a D&T subject to GCSE examination level.
- A trend in GCSE D&T results which are significantly above the national average is well established. In 2007 a higher proportion of students gained the highest grades, particularly A* and A grades, than did so nationally. Boys' attainment was significantly above the national average and notably every boy entered gained a grade. Girls' performance dipped in 2007 and actions to systematically tackle this are being taken.
- Students develop thoughtful and creative designs in every material and, together with high quality making skills, they produce products of

professional and commercial quality. Students are proud of their work, and rightly so. Students work independently, they share resources and respect equipment. They work safely alongside others, and in groups, and can plan their time effectively. Students reflect on their work and suggest ways of improving it. They are developing an appreciation of design in the world around them.

- Discussions with students in every year show that they enjoy their D&T experiences because they recognise that they make progress in lesson after lesson.

Quality of teaching and learning

Overall the quality of teaching and learning in D&T is excellent.

- Teaching is never less than very good, and most often excellent. This is because teachers are extremely skilful in providing learning to match students' needs. Teachers' well-prepared and highly paced lessons and effective questioning skills enable students to learn quickly and effectively. Relationships are excellent.
- Assessment is thorough and regular feedback helps students to move on in their learning. Students say; "Teachers are always there for you, to advise and help". Consequently students listen carefully to their teachers. They learn to present and develop original and interesting ideas effectively and are well supported to become independent learners.
- The resources of the school's technology status are very effectively used. ICT is very well integrated into all areas. It adds quality to students' presentations and to their final products. Computer aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) is used by students in every year group to produce work of quality. Teachers use their electronic whiteboards to present interesting, informative and challenging lessons.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the D&T curriculum is outstanding.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced in every year, enabling the students to gain a very wide experience of designing and making in a broad range of materials. It enables students to make products of the very highest quality. At Key Stage 4, the wide range of GCSE subject options meets the needs, aspirations and capabilities of all the students.
- A wide range of enrichment activities, including activities in association with university departments, contribute well to learners' achievement and enjoyment. Provision to support gifted and talented students is notable, for example, in the project to design a racing car.
- Overall the curriculum meets its aims because it enables students to develop skills needed in the world of work, particularly with regard to the design and manufacturing industry. Strong links with industry, and the university are well established and actively used to further develop students' knowledge of how design and making skills are widely applied.
- Although the school is designated 11-16, it uses its resources well to support the local community; AS level D&T is provided as part of a

consortium arrangement with the local sixth form college as they do not have suitable facilities.

Leadership and management

Leadership of D&T is excellent both at whole school and departmental level.

- The school is committed to producing outstanding D&T. You and your governors very actively support the development of the subject in the school. This highly effective management is due to the regular and rigorous self-evaluation that is undertaken both at whole school and departmental level.
- The head of department provides outstanding leadership to the committed and high quality team of teachers. They, together with the Advanced Skills Teacher (AST), have established a strong record of change and innovation to make the curriculum relevant, challenging and exciting for students. Teachers and students are very well supported by the technician staff.

The extent to which the D&T department is prepared for the Key Stage 3 and 14-19 curriculum changes:

- Changes have been well anticipated, planned and incorporated into the Key Stage 3 and 14-19 curriculum.
- The current Key Stage 3 curriculum already provides opportunities for all young people to learn to make healthy meals and this meets the statutory time requirements.
- The school's provision of advanced level study of design and technology for young people in other schools makes a useful contribution to the local 14-19 partnership, widens the uptake of D&T, and helps to promote progression routes for young people.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that standards of achievement, particularly that of girls, are maintained year upon year
- developing better awareness of pupils starting points in Year 7, to more effectively inform target setting and to check pupils' progress as they move through the school.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop D&T 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

Andrew Lyons
Additional Inspector