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Dr C Rolph
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Dear Dr Rolph

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 28-29 January 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 students' work and observation of lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

- Attainment in D&T is slightly below average on entry and above average by the end of Key Stage 4. Students make good progress and achieve well. The small number of students in the sixth form are also achieving well. There is an improving trend in standards. Recent improvements in monitoring students' progress within their GCSE coursework are having a positive impact on standards.
- Standards at Key Stage 3 are broadly average. GCSE results in 2007 are above average in Product Design and just below average in Electronics. However, there is some variability within the different focus areas of Product Design. Evidence shows the trend of improvement continues with challenging, yet achievable, targets for 2008.
- Students' personal development is good. Students enjoy D&T because of its practical nature and the variety of designing and making

activities. Sixth form students rise to the challenge of more freedom in designing for specific clients.

Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

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

- Teaching and learning are good overall across the key stages. Good subject knowledge enables enthusiastic teachers to provide expert guidance to students. A good range of teaching methods is employed to accommodate a range of learning styles. Learning support assistants are well managed and have a positive impact on students' learning. Teachers are flexible and willing to teach in more than one focus area enabling students to experience a wide range of practical activity in Key Stage 3.
- Students' work is systematically assessed and students are provided with clear, developmental feedback and targets for improvement. There is an effective system for tracking students' progress and teachers can readily identify any under achievement and take appropriate action.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Students receive a broad and balanced D&T curriculum at Key Stage 3 and they cover the National Curriculum programmes of study. There is a good range of designing and making activities enabling students to gain experience with a wide range of materials, components and processes.
- There are work experience opportunities for only a small number of students identified as being at risk of disaffection. However, the Wolds College, due to open in September 2008, will provide a wider range of vocational opportunities.
- Curriculum planning is good and students speak highly of the well organised department. The one hour lessons, on a fortnightly timetable, are used effectively. However, one hour is rather short for some of the practical food lessons. Teachers give of their time generously and practical areas are accessible to students at the end of school day and at lunchtimes.
- Good designing skills are developed across the focus areas with an emphasis on graphic communication skills in Key Stage 4. High quality design booklets help Key Stage 3 students organise and record their technical knowledge and design work. The use of modern tools and equipment including computer aided design and manufacture, in modern well designed accommodation, has a positive impact on the quality of making. Sixth form students benefit from the use of industrial links to support their learning.
- Highly effective D&T outreach work is provided by the department. Local primary schools have regular access to highly skilled D&T teachers who support them in improving their D&T provision. The primary schools' feedback is excellent.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of D&T are good.

- Good quality subject leadership and a strong team ethos are significant factors in helping to raise achievement and standards, thus paving the way for improvement in D&T.
- The departmental self evaluation is thorough and the school system of 'Middle Management Moderated Self Review' provides an accurate picture of the department's strengths and areas for further development.

Inclusion

The school's inclusion policy is closely followed by the D&T department. Consequently, all students are valued and have equal access to the D&T curriculum. Individual special needs are very well catered for and supported by the effective deployment of skilled learning support assistants. Students with learning difficulties, therefore, make similar progress to other groups of students. All new and refurbished D&T accommodation is adapted to accommodate any special physical needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving standards in GCSE Electronics so that they match those in Product Design
- extending the range of technical vocational courses on offer.

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

Michael Stanton
Additional Inspector