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Mr M Squires
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Dear Mr Squires

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 June 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 D&T activities.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in D&T are good.

- Children start at the school with average skills and capability in D&T. Problem solving skills and capability to innovate are quickly developed through projects set in local contexts. Pupils frequently work with parents, carers, and visiting experts on projects. A good example is in Years 3 and 4 where children are working with a landscape gardener to design a garden, grow food, prepare and eat it.
- Pupils make good progress and standards are above average by the time they leave in Year 6. Achievement is good across a wide range of practical activities. The school is aware of aspects that can be developed further, particularly using wood, plastic and clay to enhance the already good knowledge and skills when using food and textiles.

- Pupils' capability to innovate when designing is a particularly strong feature of D&T work in the school. Their eagerness to learn is contagious. Children readily challenge thinking, explore new options with great enthusiasm, and talk with much interest about their experiences in D&T.

Quality of teaching and learning

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

- Work is well planned and, as a result, teaching and learning is good across the year groups. Subject knowledge commands the respect of pupils and teachers rightly identify areas they would like to know more about such as electronics and the use of more sophisticated tools and equipment. The teaching of design is lively and creative.
- Resources are well matched to design tasks and projects, especially the use of the local environment. This starts at an early age, for example 'forest nursery sessions' which include outdoor D&T activities are run in conjunction with the local children's centre.
- Staff work very well as a team and there is a good level of individual support to help move learning forward, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. D&T work is assessed and pupils know how well they are doing. D&T capability is measured against national curriculum levels.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is very good.

- The needs and interest of pupils are well met through the stimulating and lively contexts used for project work. Children use a good variety of strategies when challenged to design and make, and the use of visits, for instance to a local blacksmiths, is a rich enhancement. The involvement of parents and carers to help and support is exceptionally good.
- Pupils quickly learn to design and make for themselves and planning successfully includes coverage of the D&T programmes of study. National schemes such as the Qualification and Curriculum Authority Units of work have been developed in project work such as designing and making a pond, and shelters for a mountain rescue team.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of D&T are good.

- Leaders and managers value D&T and capacity to make sure the subject develops is good. The school's own evaluation of D&T performance is accurate and well evidenced by work over time.

- Leadership is a collective responsibility which effectively supports the 35 children in the school. Teaching and learning in D&T is monitored and professional development needs are well known.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- making sure knowledge and skills when working with rigid materials matches the high standard found with textiles and food
- extending use of systems and control in project work.

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

As I explained, 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