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Mr J Crossley  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Crossley

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 1-2 October 2008 with Tim Bristow HMI, 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 ten lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards overall are satisfactory.

- Standards students reach in D&T are below the expectations for their age at the end of Key Stage 3 and are below the national average at Key Stage 4. Year 11 students' achievement in D&T is generally in line with their performance in other subjects. However students did not achieve as well as expected in the 2008 GCSE examinations.
- The gap between the performance of boys and girls in D&T is narrower than is found nationally. Specialist one-to-one support enables students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) to achieve in line with other groups of students.

- By the end of Year 9 students confidently develop a range of practical skills through following instructions. They show greater independence in using cooking and food preparation skills, but this is constrained in other aspects of D&T where they remain reliant on teacher direction for the next steps in their learning.
- Students' personal development is satisfactory. They enjoy the subject and this is demonstrated well in the high proportion of students, particularly boys, who continue to study it at Key Stage 4. Students behave responsibly and respond positively to the secure and safe environment in D&T, they follow instructions and apply health and safety rules within the relevant material areas.

### Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory.

- Teachers establish good working relationships with students. Good class management and organisation of learning in graphics and food lessons enables students to make successful products. In graphics lessons students rise to the opportunities to use computer aided design creatively. However use of computers by students is inconsistent across all aspects of D&T. Opportunities are missed for students in Years 7-9 to use them to work quickly and professionally to ensure they all complete their work before moving onto the next project.
- The quality of teaching and assessment are inconsistent. Staff do not have sufficient understanding of the progress students are making. Therefore the personalisation and challenge of learning is weak because work is not tailored sufficiently to meet the needs of all students.

### Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is inadequate.

- The scheme of work at Key Stage 3 is limited in range and depth for students to confidently plan and modify recipes, learn about sustainability, work in increasingly complex contexts and know about the work of designers, engineers and industry.
- Some new projects which focus upon designing desirable products excite students: further projects could usefully be included to modernise the curriculum.
- Planning is based upon material disciplines and is insufficiently joined up to ensure students progressively develop the key concepts of design and technology.
- Organisation of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 hinders continuity and progress and frustrates students who want to make products to a higher standard.

## Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory.

- Senior leaders value the subject and this is demonstrated in investment in new staff and resources. These recent investments have yet to demonstrate a significant impact on students' attainment and achievement.
- Co-ordination and leadership of D&T has established an inclusive environment in which students with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and students consider D&T provides them with useful life skills. However a vision for the department is not demonstrably shared.
- Insufficient procedures within the department for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning and inadequate tracking of students' progress hinder accurate self-evaluation and improvement planning.

The extent to which inequality and stereotyping are tackled in D&T

- The school has successfully narrowed the achievement gap between boys and girls. Boys are interested in the subject and feel they are valued because of the emphasis on practical techniques of demonstration, factual recall in questioning and the good relationships with staff. However, stereotypical subject choices are demonstrated at Key Stage 4.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- using the school's own systems to track the progress students make
- monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning and the impact on the curriculum
- improving the quality of the curriculum to ensure the missing elements are included in the schemes of work.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop D&T in the school.

As explained in the previous letter, 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

Gina White  
Her Majesty's Inspector  
Subject Adviser for Design and Technology