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Mrs C Sharpe
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Sharpe

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 15 December 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: observations in five lessons, discussions with three groups of pupils, discussions with the subject coordinator and other teachers, a scrutiny of pupils' work and the analysis of relevant school documents.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards overall are good.

- The children enter the Nursery with skills that are below those expected nationally. In formative design and technology activities they make good progress. For example, children in the Nursery were able to choose from a range of glues carefully selecting the appropriate one and explained why it was chosen, when making their party hats.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment exceeds national expectations. Year 6 pupils demonstrate very good designing and making ability: they can make decisions and test materials and evaluate their work against clear success criteria. For example pupils analyse why their

model did not meet the criteria and what they would do to make them more successful in future.

- Pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. In D&T lessons pupils have excellent opportunities for teamwork and demonstrate very mature cooperation skills. Behaviour is excellent because pupils thoroughly enjoy D&T lessons. As one Year 2 pupil reported, 'I really like being able to use my own ideas.'
- Pupils who experience learning difficulties in some subjects achieve well in D&T. Well planned support from teaching assistants enables them to make progress as rapidly as their peers. Pupils are proud of their work and this contributes to their high self esteem.
- Progress over all is good, however it slows in some year groups where insufficient opportunities are available for pupils to demonstrate their design skills. Where this happens pupils designs are superficial and concentrate too narrowly on decoration.

Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

The quality of teaching and learning overall is good.

- Generally teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. Lessons are extremely well supported by highly skilled teaching assistants who demonstrate good questioning skills that support and challenge the pupils when they are solving problems.
- In the best lessons teachers ensure that the pupils' independence and creativity are developed by carefully developing projects so that they have open ended solutions, enabling pupils to use their own ideas.
- Assessment for learning opportunities are built into lessons plans and pupils' progress is regularly checked. The work is suitably differentiated so that most pupils are challenged, but good support is at hand when it is required.
- In the lessons where teaching is satisfactory, the development of design skills is a relative weakness. The designs expected from pupils are not fit for purpose so that they do not aid them when making their products. The work is too prescriptive so that pupils have insufficient opportunity to make their own choices or use their own ideas.

Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- A good range of visits and visitors enrich the pupils' work in D&T lessons. For example, the recent trip to Conisbrough Castle by Year 5 pupils led to the design and production of model castles that were completed to an extremely high standard.
- Close links to a local secondary school with specialist status has led to good transition work in Year 6 which pupils report that they thoroughly enjoy.

- Good cross-curricular links have been established that enable pupils to practise skills learnt in other subjects. For example, pupils demonstrate very good independent measuring skills because they are expected to regularly use them in D&T lessons. Such links also give meaning and purpose to D&T lessons. For example, the boats pupils built in Year 2 utilised the work on winding mechanisms carried out in science lessons.
- Pupils with disabilities benefit from bespoke provision enabling them to fully access the D&T curriculum.
- The school has particularly good facilities for food preparation which are utilised within lessons and by an after school club.
- Pupils use a wide variety of construction materials and food in D&T lessons, but opportunities to work with textiles are generally limited to craft activities.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are good.

- Staff share understanding of the importance of D&T so that the recent change in subject leadership has not had an adverse impact on the high quality of provision or the progress that is being made by pupils.
- The talented, but inexperienced newly appointed subject coordinator is ably supported by others in school so that she has made a good start. The good progress she has made to complete the tasks in her action plan demonstrates that she is well placed to make a strong contribution to the leadership of the subject.
- The subject coordinator has carried out a valuable audit of the D&T work of the school through a detailed examination of curriculum plans. As a result she has accurately evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum.
- Health and safety procedures are good. Pupils demonstrate safe procedures in lessons and know the safety rules when using specific pieces of equipment such as hack saws.

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

- The school ensures that all pupils have equality of access to the activities offered. For example in the nursery, teaching assistants observed children to ensure that girls were encouraged to use the construction equipment and that it was not monopolised by the boys.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve the opportunities that pupils have to design their products in some lessons so that they:

- develop creativity by giving pupils more opportunities to use their own ideas and select materials from a range of choices
- broaden the scope of designing to ensure it gives sufficient attention to solving problems to support pupils making.

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

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's Inspector