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11 February 2009

Mr G Van Cauwelaert
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Dear Mr Van Cauwelaert

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 13 January 2009 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 D&T work in lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory and rising.

- Students start in Year 7 with slightly below average skills and capability in D&T. Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average in Year 11. Recent changes in the way the subject is organised and delivered are making an impact. This can be seen in the more rapid progress students are making. As a result, standards are higher in graphic design in Year 11, and product design in the sixth form. Students' with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) achieve equally as well. Boys do not achieve as highly as girls and the school is taking the right action to redress the balance.

- GCSE results are best in graphic design and textiles. They are improving in other D&T subjects although the variation across the specialist areas is significant. School predictions for D&T results in 2009 and evidence from the visit supports the continuing trend of improvement and rising standards of work.
- Students' personal development and well being is well supported by the subject. They say D&T allows them to take more responsibility for their own learning and they enjoy practical work.

Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and the proportion of good teaching is increasing.

- Evidence from the visit confirms the school view that the balance is shifting from satisfactory to good and better teaching and learning across the subject. The issue of staff absence has generated gaps in teaching and learning which continue to be a cause for concern. The amount of time students are engaged in practical work during lessons is increasing although in some specialist areas this is insufficient. Students work with accuracy and precision in all year groups, for example when designing and making medals for the 2012 Olympics in Year 7, clocks in Year 9, and compact disc holders in Year 11.
- Students successfully engage in design and make projects. The school is right to expect D&T knowledge and understanding to be at least good in all aspects of the subject. Recent changes in subject delivery are ensuring work is more challenging. It is well pitched for needs and abilities and more sharply focussed on developing D&T capability over time.
- Assessment practice is improving. Students know how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to achieve their target grades. Data are well analysed and effective checks are made on students' individual progress.

Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- A good range of appropriate materials and components are used to design and make products. Recent changes to the curriculum are meeting the needs and interests of students well. The changes are well constructed to match the demands of examination course specifications at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Students work on projects which are up-to-date and relevant, for example packaging digital music players and using computer-aided design equipment when engaged in project work.
- The use of new materials in a well organised environment is making a good impact and helping students to achieve more highly. The

curriculum is effectively aligned to meet National Curriculum requirements and students find projects interesting and relevant. They enjoy opportunities to innovate and produce original ideas and solutions. The department is exploring more use of microelectronics, systems and control in project work.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are good.

- Subject leadership is strong and effective. The quality of classroom leadership and management is improving as a result. The senior management team ensures the capacity to improve in D&T is maintained and expanded.
- The self-evaluation of D&T is rigorous and provides an accurate picture of strengths and areas for development. The right actions are being taken to make sure the subject continues to thrive and develop.

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

Specific action is being taken to promote gender equality. The school has appointed a female teacher in resistant materials. The school is aware of the gap between girls and boys performance. New strategies to raise achievement are making a good impact, for example supporting boys in the planning and management of their coursework.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- the significant variation in GCSE results across the specialist areas
- extending the use of systems and control in project work
- increasing the amount of time students are engaged in practical 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

Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector