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Mr P Slough
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Dear Mr Slough

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 24-25 February 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 pupils' work and observation of D&T work in lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- The results of baseline assessments at the start of Year 7 show students start with below average skills and capability in D&T. This is an improvement on previous years where attainment on entry was well below average. Students make rapid progress and achieve very well from a low starting point. Standards are average in Year 11 with the best results in textiles and food technology.
- Evidence from the visit confirms the school's view that standards are continuing to improve as a result of recent changes in the way the

subject is led and delivered. GCSE results were higher than expected in 2008 with more girls achieving grades A*-C than boys. D&T results are improving but have yet to match the best performing subjects in the school.

- All groups of pupils including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and the exceptionally large number with English as an additional language achieve equally well.
- Students discuss their experiences in D&T with maturity and enthusiasm. The subject is making a very strong contribution to the personal development and well being of students.

Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

The quality of teaching and learning is good with outstanding features.

- The school and the department's analysis of teaching and learning are rigorous and accurate when finding the vast majority to be good and better. Teaching and learning in textiles is outstanding in the main school and the sixth form.
- Lessons are very well organised and delivered to develop students' ability to learn for themselves through project work. Designing and making good quality products which students can be proud of is at the heart of the teaching and learning in D&T. Work is pitched at the right level for the exceptionally wide range of needs and abilities. Schemes of work are effectively focussed on developing D&T capability over time.
- Assessment practice has improved significantly. An innovative approach to baseline assessments when Year 7 students start at the school is sharpening the tracking of individual progress. As a result, students in Years 7 and 8 are achieving more highly. The department is right to think integrating the assessment tasks into practical design and make projects is the next stage of development.

Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is excellent.

- The programmes and activities are exceptionally well matched to meet the needs and interests of students. They thoroughly enjoy learning as a result. An outstanding feature is the use of work related contexts identified by local business and organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry. For example students following the NVQ catering course are providing a lunchtime buffet for 300 people commissioned by Birmingham airport for the opening of a new building.
- Computer aided design and manufacture is well covered at Key Stage 4 and changes to the curriculum at Key Stage 3 meet the demands of the national curriculum very well. Recent improvements in the

accommodation are well matched to student needs and course delivery. Resources are very well deployed to make sure students use a good variety of components and materials when designing and making products.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are outstanding.

- Leadership at all levels is excellent. Senior managers have ensured capacity to maintain and improve D&T has significantly expanded in the last three years. Subject performance is closely monitored to ensure achievement and standards continue to rise.
- Subject leadership and classroom management are highly effective. Self-evaluation provides an accurate picture of strengths and areas for development. Recent changes in the way D&T is organised and delivered are improving standards for all students irrespective of background and ability. An outstanding feature is the shared vision by all leaders and managers to move the subject forward and make sure all students achieve as well as they can.

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

- School plans and actions to tackle the gaps between boys and girls performance are very well advanced and make the best impact possible in the context of the school's work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards to match the best performing subjects in the school
- integrating baseline assessment tasks with practical design and make projects.

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