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Mr B N Levy  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Levy

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 15–16 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 lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards overall are satisfactory.

- Students' attainment on entry to the school is above average. All students study D&T until the end of Year 9. They acquire basic cooking skills, demonstrate secure knowledge of nutrients and hygiene and develop an understanding of criteria which they use to guide their ideas for developing food products. Most students are developing the skills necessary to manage projects and some are developing awareness of technical terminology.
- However, students do not readily transfer the skills and techniques they learn in one area of D&T to another, for example, they produce few ideas

for designing products when working with resistant materials, electronics and when making graphic products.

- Teacher assessments show that students' attainment in D&T by the end of Year 9 is below the average expected for their age and for the majority of students this is significantly well below their achievement in other subjects.
- Few students choose to continue their studies to GCSE and to A Level but those who do so achieve well. Attainment at grades A\* and A at GCSE is significantly high.
- Students' personal development is good: they like making things, particularly food products, and do so safely. In discussions students say they are developing confidence in cooking and many are becoming known for their 'signature dishes'. Year 10 students enjoy and are proud of their work: they display persistence, thinking through technical problems and learning from mistakes

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

The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge of the specialist materials and processes and ensure students work safely. Practical demonstrations are used well to ensure students know how to proceed.
- Students listen attentively and quickly recall facts and make connections with previous lessons even when a significant time has elapsed between lessons due to rotational arrangements at Key Stage 3.
- In the best lessons teachers clearly explain the purpose of what they are learning and their expectations of high quality learning, their management of the lesson is first rate and learning is carefully planned with checks built in to ensure students understand what they are doing before moving onto the next stage. This enables students to work with greater independence, for example, they monitor the changes taking place as food is cooking, enabling them to take decisions and to manage their time effectively to undertake a range of tasks. In these lessons the pace of learning is quick and this promotes students' good progress.
- Not all teaching and learning is like this and the good practice is not shared sufficiently. In some areas of the subject students do not complete all of the work expected and insufficient basic tools and computer aided manufacturing equipment hampers pupils progress.
- Assessment, guidance and support meet students' needs at Key Stage 4, but assessment practice at Key Stage 3 is inconsistent across the teaching team.

### Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Key Stage 4 courses meet students' expectations; they are tailored to their interests and provide them with opportunities to make decisions and develop independence.
- Changes introduced to the Key Stage 3 curriculum in 2008 provide a firm base from which to work to secure students' entitlement to learn to cook. However planning for progression is weak at Key Stage 3. The subject is planned separately by teachers and results in repetition in parts of the scheme of work and gaps in the range of study, such as developing students' skills in using computer aided design and manufacture.
- Students view some aspects of D&T, particularly food and cooking as essential life skills and relevant to professional careers in the food catering and manufacturing sectors. The school provides opportunities for students to work with engineers in mathematics and visitors from a range of business sectors contribute to other subjects. However, students currently do not work with designers or engineers in D&T. Opportunities to undertake real design and make assignments with clients would usefully add greater relevance, challenge and complexity to the work in all aspects of D&T.

#### Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory.

- Aspects of D&T are well managed and ensure health and safety practices are in place. However, senior leaders, including governors, have yet to ensure shared and collaborative work takes place, good practice is shared and a clear vision and purpose for the subject is in place.
- Staff separately identify and tackle issues emerging from monitoring and evaluation. As a result, students are benefiting from the development of new food courses.
- Technician support makes an effective contribution to staff teamwork and to the support of students in food technology.

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

- The school is beginning to breakdown cultural barriers and students and their parents and carers see benefits in studying some aspects of the subject. More students are enjoying their experiences and this is reflected in the increasing numbers choosing to continue their studies of food technology.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards at Key Stage 3 and share good practice in teaching and learning
- ensuring that the subject is co-ordinated so that collaborative working practice is firmly established and provides greater consistency, particularly in assessment across all areas of design and technology

- ensuring sufficient resources to support students in making products speedily and effectively, including the use of computer aided manufacture.

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