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Mr Scott  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Scott

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 13–14 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.

- Most students achieve their targets, particularly in resistant materials and food, but there is much variability in their achievement across all D&T courses. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is just below average. The attainment of boys is well below average and the gap between their performance and that of girls is significantly wide.
- In Key Stage 3 students develop satisfactory practical skills and follow instructions to make a range of products but their designing skills, particularly in decision making and project management, are weaker. Their skills in using computers to aid designing are developing although

their skills in using and controlling computers to manufacture products are underdeveloped at both key stages.

- Students' personal development is good. They work collaboratively and behave responsibly and safely in D&T. Students enjoyment is demonstrated in the increasing numbers who choose to continue to study the subject in Years 10 to 11. Students take pride in learning new skills and say they are developing confidence in cooking, and in technical accomplishments, for example putting pockets on a pair of jeans and making a circuit to make a child's toy move.

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

The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory.

- In all lessons relationships between students and teachers are very positive, respectful and caring. Students respond and value the positive reinforcement and encouragement they receive during lessons.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and class management are good. Students use machines competently and safely during lessons and this reflects the good teaching of health and safety in D&T. Students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour in D&T lessons are good. They use subject vocabulary well in textiles and the involvement of students in teaching practical food demonstrations helps to support the learning of other students.
- In the best lessons students are encouraged to modify and develop their ideas and they develop original and innovative products. However, the good practice underlying such lessons is not shared across the department. In many lessons at Key Stage 3 learning is insufficiently adapted to students' needs and opportunities are missed to encourage creativity and to support students in developing their independence as learners.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 are pleased with the quality of personalised feedback and the frequent assessment that supports them in monitoring their progress towards their targets. Assessment is weak overall due to inconsistencies in the timeliness of assessment and the checking of students' progress during Key Stage 3.

### Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school has responded well to changes in the National Curriculum by extending opportunities for some Year 7 students to gain 'licence to cook' certificates. The Key Stage 3 schemes of work meet national requirements overall but few opportunities are provided for students to progressively develop knowledge and skills in using computer aided design and to experience and understand computer aided manufacture. Consequently the pace of making is slow, particularly when pupils use resistant materials. This limits opportunities for students to experience current

manufacturing methods and to refine and develop their abilities to solve complex technical problems, to test their products and make changes to develop their work.

- Students have few opportunities to work with designers and makers. They design mainly for themselves and their families throughout Key Stage 3 and 4. Opportunities to work in different contexts, for example to work with clients and solve real problems, could usefully provide the challenge and complexity missing from much of the work in Years 8 to 11.
- Courses at Key Stage 4 meet students' needs and interests. Students find their courses interesting in breadth and depth. They say they are learning more techniques and feel they are becoming more confident
- Students see D&T as relevant and useful in developing life skills and for making career decisions. The knowledge and skills students acquire through the study of food technology contributes well to developing students' enterprise skills and promoting their health and well-being.

#### Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory.

- Senior leaders ensure the subject is well led and recent actions to improve access to computers have begun to remove barriers and modernise D&T. However, access to computer aided manufacture is insufficient and remains a barrier to higher level achievement.
- The subject leader has a clear vision for D&T. Self-evaluation is developing well and the subject leader is incorporating students' views when monitoring and evaluating the impact of D&T.
- The school is well advanced in introducing changes in food technology to meet the requirements at Key Stage 3. Teachers' continuing professional development in computer aided design and food technology has been used effectively to broaden the curriculum.

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

- The school has yet to identify the reasons for the wide gap between boys' and girls' attainment in D&T.
- The school tackles stereotypical subject choice. Boys are increasingly choosing to continue to study food technology in Year 10 because the course is practical and engaging and appeals to their interests in cooking as a life skill and as a possible career in catering.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure students have opportunities to work with designers and makers and progressively develop skills and understanding of computer aided design and manufacture
- ensure consistency in reviewing students' progress towards targets

- take action to raise the attainment of boys.

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