

13 May 2009

Mrs A McGarrigle
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs McGarrigle

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 26 March 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 good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Children's experiences in the Early Years Foundation Stage provide a good base for their work in D&T. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils can use scissors and sew. They select and use materials safely, and with some skill, to make models. Pupils' knowledge and awareness of how things are joined, and how they move, is under developed and this does not help them enough when describing how they think the products they make might work, or to talk about their ideas.
- Key Stage 2 pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve well across a range of activities. They are beginning to develop an understanding of circuits and explore how computers can help designers to model their ideas. Year 6 pupils are working to fine tolerances in making costumes to fit super heroes. In so doing they are developing their understanding of patterns, templates, fit and size effectively.

- Throughout both key stages pupils work safely and are learning to persevere and try things out for themselves.

Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.

- Pupils enjoy D&T hugely and participate enthusiastically, particularly in making activities and tasks. They concentrate very well in lessons: for example Year 3 pupils worked intensely to make sure they accurately followed the sequence of stitches when sewing felt together.
- Work is mostly well-matched to pupils' needs. Teachers' questioning is directed, incisive and encouraging and their demonstrations to small groups or individuals help pupils to know what is expected of them and what choices they have to do things differently.
- Some lessons are exceptionally well planned. For example a Year 6 lesson was planned in great detail. It was based upon the teacher's extensive research and excellent understanding of the problems pupils might encounter and how they might be overcome. This helped to promote pupils good progress during the lesson to develop a costume for their character.
- Where teaching was weaker, the poor sequencing of learning left pupils confused about what was expected of them.

Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Pupils have many opportunities to work with a range of materials, to make things that interest them and to use good quality resources. However, few opportunities are provided for pupils to progressively develop their knowledge and understanding of structures and mechanisms.
- The school makes good use of specialists and adults other than teachers to enable pupils to learn about robots and Traveller's cooking and culture.
- Cross curricular links to other subjects help to enrich pupils' knowledge, skills and experiences of D&T. For example pupils practice making skills in art and use their developing knowledge of Egyptian culture to influence their designs for jewellery.
- Teachers are beginning to make technological links in topic work and some, for example when pupils learn about the Greek's design of bridges, are well researched. In some topics excellent and detailed planning ensures the requirements for D&T are met in rigorous and meaningful experiences. However this good practice is not sufficiently shared and not all curriculum experiences are so well designed.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are good.

- You value D&T and this is well demonstrated across the school in the displays and wealth of products pupils have made, in their recognition of qualities such as perseverance and their enjoyment in learning by doing.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and the school knows the strengths of D&T and the areas it needs to tackle to improve. The school's emphasis on health and safety is evident in the care pupils take when working with tools and equipment.
- The subject leader, whilst new to the role, is enthusiastic and ensures good quality resources are provided. She is well supported with experienced and effective teachers.

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

- No inequality or stereotyping was noted during this visit. Costume design and the context of 'super heroes' are well chosen to appeal to both boys and girls.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that pupils progressively develop knowledge and understanding of structures and mechanisms and that sufficient emphasis is placed on the functionality of the products they make
- ensuring the best practice in planning D&T and in teaching is shared more widely across the school to raise standards.

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