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Mr S Burrows  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Burrows

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 17–18 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 is good and standards overall are satisfactory.

- Students enter the school with attainment and skills that are well below average for their age, and in some year groups they are significantly well below. By the end of Key Stage 3 most students develop a sound knowledge and understanding of materials and their properties. Higher attaining students identify risks and how to minimise them when making production plans in food technology. However students have few opportunities to develop independence, take design decisions or develop alternative methods of solving problems.
- Results are steadily improving at Key Stage 4, particularly in the increasingly popular courses of engineering and hospitality and catering. Students make good progress from their starting points.

- Students' personal development is good. They enjoy making products. They work collaboratively and behave responsibly and safely in D&T. Personal development days contribute effectively to developing students' awareness of environmental and sustainability issues when designing and making.

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

The quality of teaching and learning overall is good.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is wide ranging and enables them to teach a very broad range of courses. Use of computer aided design and manufacturing is well planned and supported; students are beginning to exploit such resources to make products quickly and to a high quality. Relevant opportunities for students to apply their literacy skills are consistently positive features of lessons. However, opportunities for students to develop project management skills are insufficiently planned in Years 7-9.
- Students have good attitudes to learning: Year 7 students concentrated well to correctly recall the stages required in making paper. Boys are actively involved in lessons and respond more frequently than girls to teachers' questioning. In some lessons, students particularly enjoy the competitive nature of activities and work with urgency to meet deadlines.
- Assessment and marking are satisfactory overall but are stronger at Key Stage 4 where they are more detailed and frequent than at Key Stage 3. Students on examination courses agreed when a fellow student said, "Feedback on performance is really good. I have a clear idea of how well I am doing and exactly what to do next".

#### Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The school aims to provide a curriculum which is innovative, exciting and flexible and is well on the way to achieving this in D&T. A diverse range of courses, types and levels of qualification in Years 10 and 11 meet the expectations of students and in some cases exceed them. Students who study the new diploma in engineering are enthused by the course and mentor support they receive. They relish the challenge of reading engineering plans, some are confident in interpreting drawings, and they have excellent attitudes to learning.
- Good use of after school clubs and competitions, industrial links and visiting engineers enrich the curriculum and help students to see D&T as relevant and useful in developing skills for life and work.
- Schemes of work for Key Stage 3 provide few opportunities for students to solve real design problems in their local community or to work in a range of contexts.

## Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are good.

- The excellent support and attitude of the school leadership team in developing D&T are well demonstrated in the breadth of curriculum provision, investment in good quality resources and in providing appropriate class sizes to ensure pupils receive the support and attention they need.
- D&T is well led and managed. Good practice in monitoring and evaluating teachers' assessment and marking at Key Stage 4 does not extend sufficiently to Key Stage 3. Further refinement of procedures is required to identify and consistently share best practice to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

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

- New courses which develop pupils' awareness of work related skills are having a positive impact in engaging boys in food and girls in engineering.
- No inequality or stereotyping was noted during the visit.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- introducing opportunities for Key Stage 3 students to work on real design and make projects to enable all students to take design decisions, develop project management skills and apply them in challenging contexts
- ensuring rigour in the quality assurance of learning and assessment to identify best practice and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

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