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Mr M Humble  
Headteacher  
St Matthews RC VA Primary School  
Alnwick Grove  
Jarrow  
Tyne and Wear  
NE32 5YT

Dear Mr Humble

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 May 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.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in D&T are satisfactory.

- Children in the reception class start with below expected skills in D&T. For example, many find it difficult to use scissors to cut out pictures effectively and accurately when making a mini-beast book. Pupils make good progress because of recent improvements in delivery and organisation. They achieve well across a range of practical activities.
- Standards are average overall and higher at Key Stage 1 as a result of the improvements in provision. All groups of pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress. Pupils enjoy practical work and this is demonstrated very well in their enthusiasm and concentration when engaged in designing and making activities.

## Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Planning meets the needs and interests of all groups of pupils. Good individual support during D&T activities helps pupils to learn more effectively about the subject. The school knows the proportion of good teaching and learning in D&T has risen and is right to expect quality to be consistently good.
- Strong links with local schools are improving subject knowledge which the school recognises as an area to develop, particularly in the use of tools, equipment, systems and control. Resources are appropriately chosen within the constraints of cost and storage. The school acknowledges assessment practice is insufficiently rigorous to ensure D&T capability is fully evaluated.

## Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- More sophisticated coordination of D&T activities has improved the quality of programmes which are effectively planned to meet the needs and interests of pupils. The school is developing new approaches to promote the creative curriculum well and builds on effective links with other subject such as art and science. The work of visiting experts is a good feature, for example an assistant director of sculpture helped Year 3 to plan, design, and make more effectively. Curriculum links with a local secondary school are helping to improve D&T skills and understanding, for example when working with food.

## Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are good.

- D&T is moving forwards as a result of the vision that you share with staff who intervene and make improvements when required. The school accurately evaluates subject performance and the purpose of D&T is understood and shared. Capacity to ensure D&T grows and develops is good. The quality of provision is improving and pupils are achieving more highly as a result.

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

There is no evidence of any inequality or gaps between boys' and girls' performance. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and different groups are fully involved in all aspects of D&T.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- evaluating pupils' individual D&T capability and progress more rigorously to further raise achievement and standards
- extending teachers' and pupils subject knowledge.

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