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Mrs E Huckerby  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Huckerby

### Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 13-14 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 students, scrutiny of departmental documentation, analysis of students' work and the observation of five lessons.

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

### Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards overall are satisfactory.

- Students enter the school with broadly average attainment in D&T and make good progress by the end of Key Stage 4 in their D&T GCSEs. Results last year were not as good in engineering. The school has acted quickly to remedy this. The courses have been revised and strategies introduced to support students better in managing their work. Consequently, all students are making at least satisfactory progress to reach their targets.
- Girls outperform boys. The school is aware of this difference in achievement and is taking steps to address it. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress.

- Students' personal development is good. They have a mature attitude to each other and their work. Older students are very well motivated and most work very well independently. This helps teachers to promote learning in lessons.

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

The quality of teaching and learning overall is good.

- Learning is most effective where teachers are confidently using assessment information to help students to work independently. In these lessons teachers' questioning is effective in enabling students to discuss their own learning. Good links are made to National Curriculum levels and to exam assessment criteria. As a result most students understand the level they are working at and their strengths and areas for development. Good quality feedback provides precise information to enable them to improve their work further. However, this good practice is not consistent throughout the department.
- Good relationships are a strong feature of the department. Students trust staff and know they do their best for them. Students said how much they valued the extra time given by their teachers outside lessons. D&T is popular because students are encouraged to make their own ideas and to be creative. The quality of finished work is high, with students confidently using computer aided design and computer aided manufacturer (CAD/CAM). Solutions to design briefs are imaginative.
- Teachers differentiate work well for lower and middle attaining students. However, they do not always provide sufficient challenge for higher attaining students and this limits their opportunities to gain the highest grades at GCSE.

#### Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The breadth of the Key Stage 3 course is good. Students are able to study a full range of material areas including systems and control. Most projects are well thought through and make good use of modern technology and industrial practices. However, progression of designing and making capabilities is not always maximised and opportunities are missed to build on students' prior learning in other material areas.
- 'Flexible Fridays' are a good innovation and have resulted in staff embracing different ways of teaching. Students are able to spend an extended time every Friday developing their ideas. As a result students are producing a higher standard of work.

## Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are good.

- You and the senior staff provide effective support to the work of the D&T department and encourage their developments in using assessment and trying new ideas on 'flexible Fridays'. The lead teachers are willing to model new ideas in teaching and learning which have impacted on raising standards. Their vision for the subject and willingness to embrace change are driving improvements.
- Health and safety are secured, technician support is good and staff expertise is effectively deployed.

The extent to which the school promotes awareness and relevance of D&T to pupils and parents and carers

- The school's vision for D&T is shared with parents and carers well and is demonstrated through the keenness of students to study more than one D&T subject at Key Stage 4.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the good practices in the department are shared effectively with all staff
- improving progression across the material areas so that students' prior learning is built on effectively
- improving differentiation so that higher attaining students are challenged and able to achieve higher grades.

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

Michelle Parker  
Her Majesty's Inspector