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Mrs L Hourihan
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hourihan

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 29 June 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 pupils, scrutiny of departmental documentation, analysis of pupils' work and the observation of three lessons.

Design and Technology

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards overall are satisfactory.

- Pupils enter the school with lower than national expectations. They make good progress in D&T and achieve standards in line with the national average.
- All pupils are taught in small groups and are well known by all the staff. Work is appropriately differentiated to ensure all pupils understand what they need to do and how to do it. There is no difference in the performance of boys and girls. Pupils with learning difficulties and /or disabilities are supported effectively and make good progress.

- Effective scrutiny of test papers has enabled the school to identify weaknesses in writing and mathematics and use this to improve pupils' work in D&T.
- Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils work together effectively. Independence is fostered through effective team and paired work. All pupils enjoy D&T and are justly proud of their work. They can explain clearly the processes that were involved in making and take turns and share resources.

Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

The quality of teaching and learning overall is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They enjoy teaching D&T and ensure that pupils share their enthusiasm. Teachers' effective questioning and carefully structured group work enable pupils to develop ideas and apply their knowledge to solve problems. Individual solutions to design problems are encouraged well; pupils feel in control of their work and are ambitious in their choice of solutions. Carefully structured making activities develop their understanding of making skills. Pupils evaluate their work, but they do not use criteria sufficiently to consider whether what they have made is fit for purpose.
- Teaching assistants work well with groups and individual pupils to ensure they understand the work and make good progress.
- Pupils' capabilities in D&T are fostered well through the integration of literacy, numeracy and scientific knowledge and understanding. In lessons pupils understood the importance of 'fair testing'. They applied this well in devising tests to find the most suitable materials and construction techniques for the shelters they were designing.
- All work is regularly marked. Comments identify what pupils have done well but there is some inconsistency in ensuring that they always understand what they need to do next.

Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Schemes of work are judiciously planned and provide breadth and balance.
- A topic based approach is used well to create opportunities for D&T which the pupils value. This is because they can see its relevance to their lives. In addition this allows for greater time to be spent on D&T and thus pupils' skills are developed well. There is good progression across the key stages which builds on and consolidates pupils' prior learning.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are good.

- You value the contribution D&T makes to pupils' education and ensure staff training keeps them up to date. You know both staff and pupils' needs exceptionally well. This knowledge underpins your accurate self-evaluation. Action plans align well with areas requiring improvement. In addition you use the strengths of the school to give a flexible approach to the curriculum and teaching and learning so that every opportunity is taken to promote pupils' learning in D&T. This has yet to have a strong impact on attainment and progress.
- Professional development is linked carefully to school development plans.
- Health and safety procedures are regularly reviewed and applied to schemes of work. Resources are well managed.

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

- The school understands its parents and carers well and takes every opportunity to celebrate pupils' work in D&T through assemblies to which parents and carers are invited.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure criteria are used for designing and making so that pupils can evaluate whether their work is fit for purpose
- ensure that comments made when marking work communicate clearly to pupils the steps they should take to improve their work.

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