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Mr D Akers
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Akers

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology
(D&T)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 30 June-01 July 2009 to look at work in 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.

Design and Technology

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in D&T are good.

- D&T attainment is assessed when students start at the school and it is average overall. Students make good progress, achieve well and GCSE results in 2008 were above average. Results have steadily fallen since 2006 when they were well above average. This is partly the result of starting GCSE courses early at the beginning of year nine. School predictions for results in 2009 and evidence from the visit confirms this should be the last year before results rise again to their previously high levels where they were amongst the best in the school.
- Standards are highest in textiles, graphics, systems, engineering and product design. All groups of students including those with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities achieve equally as well. D&T is making a very good contribution to the personal development of students. They enjoy innovating and taking responsibility for their own design project work.

Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

The quality of teaching and learning is good with outstanding features.

- The quality of teaching and learning is exceptionally good and inspection evidence confirms the school's view that a significant proportion is outstanding. High quality, innovative products which are developed with precision and an eye for detail are at the centre of teaching and learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and well respected by students.
- The department is taking action to develop D&T capability at an earlier age in order to improve results. It is making an impact, for example the quality of learning and standards are higher in the current Year 10. Assessment practice is good and students know how well they are doing. Baseline assessments are carried out in Year 7 and the department is planning to analyse attainment on entry in more depth. Progress is tracked closely and the analysis of data is rigorous.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The D&T curriculum is broad and the very wide range of courses including engineering meet the needs of students very well. Planning and organisation to meet students' interests are highly effective. As a result, students thoroughly enjoy learning in a mature and very well managed learning environment.
- The coverage of computer aided design and manufacture is outstanding together with many other skills when designing and making with a wide range of materials. Visiting engineers and specialists are a strong feature, for example a local blacksmith worked with parents and students to learn about forge work.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management are good with outstanding features.

- Subject leadership is strong and effective. Strengths and areas for improvement are well known. Classroom leadership and management is an outstanding feature and the provision of stimulating and very interesting learning environments is highly effective. Another outstanding feature is the teamwork of all staff who share the vision to develop the D&T capability of all students at the highest level. Senior

managers recognised the need to maintain and improve D&T results and have taken the right action to ensure achievement and standards are as high as they can be.

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

- The school promotes awareness of D&T highly effectively. Parents attend exhibitions and learn alongside students in activities beyond the school curriculum. Students see work in D&T as relevant and influential on their future career choices.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving examination results
- analysing D&T attainment on entry in more depth.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop D&T in the school.

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