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Dear Mrs Platt

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: design and technology (D&T)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 5 November 2009 to look at work in D&T. Please pass on my thanks to pupils that helped to give a clear picture about the school.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on how the school promotes awareness and relevance of D&T to pupils and their parents, and the extent to which their views contribute to the school's evaluation of 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 included interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

Achievement in D&T

Pupils' achievement and standards in D&T are good.

- Pupils enter the school with higher-than-average prior attainment and make good progress in D&T. Attainment is above average by the end of

Key Stage 2. Pupils have a portfolio of their work that they are rightly proud of and can explain in great depth what they have learned.

- Pupils enjoy D&T activities and make good use of a whole-school approach to problem-solving and learning development. Consequently, pupils are able to explore ideas and develop solutions to design problems well. This cross-curricular approach, for example, developed literacy skills well through a paper-engineering project that not only gave opportunities to improve pupils' creativity but also planning and making skills.

Quality of teaching in D&T

The quality of teaching is satisfactory.

- Lessons are managed well and a range of teaching strategies are used effectively to encourage pupils to explore ideas and experiment creatively with a variety of materials.
- Teachers make good use of the limited resources available but are not always confident in using a wide range of skills and manufacturing techniques to enable pupils to make their designs.
- In the lessons observed, when activities were practical, active learning was more effective. Pupils enjoy learning by doing a great deal. At times, too much teacher-talk inhibited some of the independent learning and exploration of ideas by pupils. When pupils were given time to discuss ideas they worked well collaboratively and developed listening and higher-level speaking skills, analysing and explaining ideas well.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The D&T curriculum is linked with many other activities and subjects in the school that promote a clear approach to a deeper understanding of D&T principles.
- Designing and making projects have been used to very good effect with pupils that have found it hard to concentrate in lessons. These pupils can now produce high-quality products with a high degree of independence.
- There is a clear rationale for the curriculum that provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to be creative, develop knowledge about designing and apply scientific principles to their work.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

- The subject leader demonstrates good subject knowledge, and planning for health and safety is secure. She has a clear understanding of the purpose of the subject and has developed plans to enable non-specialist teachers to promote good progress and develop assessment strategies to monitor pupils.

- Access to continuing professional development courses, to update subject leadership and teachers' knowledge and confidence, is limited. The school is assessing levels of attainment well and monitors progress effectively in D&T.
- Opportunities to observe colleagues teaching D&T have also been limited but regular discussions to support teachers occur outside lesson time.

The school promotes the awareness and relevance of D&T to pupils and parents well.

- Pupils consider D&T is relevant to careers and to understanding how the world works. They are able to clearly relate learning in D&T to relevant areas of their lives and feel it helps them in other areas of learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing further teachers' confidence and skills in using a wider range of materials and techniques and, through monitoring of lessons, build upon and share good practice further
- broadening pupils' experience through greater access to a wider range of materials and processes.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Paul Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector