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Mrs W Taylor
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Taylor

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 26 and 27 November 2009 to look at work in D&T.

As outlined in our 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 students 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with students and staff, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is good.

- A trend of above-average attainment is well established in D&T by the end of Key Stage 4. Students, particularly girls and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points. Personalised support and tailored advice and guidance are highly effective in helping students to stay on track and are key factors in promoting attainment. The school has taken action to tackle the low

attainment and progress of a small proportion of boys in GCSE engineering.

- Students' attainment and progress at Key Stage 3 are satisfactory. Actions to develop the curriculum to ensure it enables students to progress to the very highest attainment levels are taking place.
- Most students enjoy D&T and have positive attitudes to learning. However, some boys do not listen sufficiently to questions and responses and, in some instances, their behaviour slows learning for other students. By the end of Key Stage 3, students acquire basic cooking skills to make healthy meals and can use computer-aided design and manufacture equipment well. Students in Year 11 relish the opportunity to exercise choice when undertaking projects that meet their interests.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching of D&T is good.

- Teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge. They use this effectively to develop learning resources and combine them well with a range of teaching strategies to motivate students and to make learning interesting. Teachers structure lessons effectively.
- In good and better lessons, teachers regularly checked students' understanding before moving on. In one lesson, Year 9 students progressively built up their knowledge and understanding of how to improve their own planning. Role-play, in which Year 7 students acted as health and safety inspectors to critically evaluate their teachers' demonstration, resulted in them making excellent progress in understanding the principles of food hygiene, health and safety.
- The quality of assessment is satisfactory and is stronger at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. The school is aware of shortcomings and is taking action to tackle the inconsistencies in assessment for learning and in students' understanding of what they need to do to reach the next level. In this respect, the development of sub-skills of designing and making is a positive step.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

The quality of the D&T curriculum is satisfactory.

- The overall scheme of work for D&T does not build progressively upon students' prior experiences or the next stage. The Key Stage 3 curriculum meets requirements for the breadth of designing and making, although discussion about the depth and emphasis given to aspects such as electronics, systems and control has yet to contribute to the schools' emerging vision and aims for D&T. Curriculum planning at Key Stage 4 is incomplete.
- Students are developing awareness of the need to design, make and use products in sustainable ways. Enrichment activities contribute well to

developing students' awareness of engineering and problem-solving and are beginning to demonstrate the range of contexts and applications of design and manufacture. Opportunities to develop this further would usefully support students' learning.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are good.

- Senior leaders' support for the development of D&T is demonstrated well in the effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and in the impact of improved resources on students' achievement in D&T.
- Subject leadership ensures health and safety and systems of self-evaluation are firmly established. Much work is taking place to ensure consistency in assessment and planning for progression in the curriculum. Staff make effective use of training opportunities to ensure students are prepared well for examinations. Arrangements to share good practice across the teaching team are well advanced.

The school satisfactorily promotes awareness and relevance of D&T

Students' views inform teachers' decisions in shaping schemes of work to better meet their interests and needs. Parents are regularly informed about developments and activities in D&T. The school has a developing vision for D&T but it is not shared widely.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring the curriculum is fully planned, especially at Key Stage 4, and builds systematically on students' prior experiences and looks ahead to the next stage
- sharing the emerging vision for D&T more widely to ensure it takes account of the views of key stakeholders and students' needs.

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

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector