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Mr L Nolan
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Nolan

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 26 and 27 January 2010 to look at work in D&T.

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 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 staff, parents and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good with outstanding features.

Achievement in D&T

Students' achievement in D&T is outstanding.

- A fast and improving trend of attainment is established in D&T. Over a period of four years, GCSE results have risen from well below average to significantly above. For most students, this represents outstanding progress in overcoming barriers of weak literacy and numeracy skills to meet coursework demands, and acquiring capability in using complex equipment safely to realise their ideas. Attainment at the highest grades A* or A is also improving, although trends show this is slower. School

monitoring shows that able students currently in Year 11 are making good progress to achieve high grades.

- Progress in lessons is good. The mentoring and support received in lessons by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities promote their progress and are a key factor in their high achievement.
- Students enjoy D&T and this is reflected in their very good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. They securely develop cooking skills and adopt safe and hygienic practices: parents and students report that what they learn in school is applied at home. D&T makes a good contribution to the development of students' understanding of workplace skills. Their awareness of the moral and social responsibilities of designers and technologists is developing satisfactorily.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching of D&T is good with outstanding features.

- The specialist expertise of teachers is deployed well in examination courses. Teachers have a secure understanding of what is required for grades A* and A work: this is demonstrated effectively in planning and conveyed very clearly to students. Lessons have a clear purpose and focus. In the best lessons, planning is based securely on teachers' assessments of the strengths and weaknesses in students' work. This enables teachers to tailor their teaching exceptionally well to individual students' needs.
- A wide range of teaching methods is used effectively in lessons: a secure focus on technical vocabulary and the meaning of words supports the development of students' literacy skills. The best lessons use questioning, discussion and inspiring resources exceptionally well to challenge students' thinking and conventional views of products. This leads to unusual and innovative design ideas. This excellent practice is not consistent across the faculty.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

The quality of the curriculum in D&T is good.

- The curriculum is inclusive and adapted well at Key Stage 4 to meet students' needs and interests. Students and parents value the opportunities to study construction and this has a significant impact on their enjoyment of learning and awareness of the relevance of D&T. The commitment of staff and high take-up by students of extensive study support and extra-curricular opportunities make a significant contribution to students' achievement.
- The enrichment of the curriculum is contributing well to develop students' awareness of industry and opportunities to design and make products for clients. This adds to the challenge and enjoyment of D&T.
- Schemes of work demonstrate a secure emphasis on sustainability. Key Stage 3 planning is insufficiently coordinated to reduce duplication, and to

promote progression of core D&T skills. The does not support students enough in enabling them to be more independent when managing projects or to systematically learn strategies to better support them in thinking and analysing products.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are good.

- The strengths in leadership are firmly demonstrated in students' achievement, the consistent application of school monitoring systems and good quality resources and accommodation. The new leader of D&T has engaged staff well in refining the vision for the subject. Training opportunities are used successfully to develop new examination courses and to develop resources to support teaching and learning. Systems for monitoring and evaluating most aspects of D&T are well established and applied successfully at Key Stage 4. Too little attention has been given to bring coherence to planning at Key Stage 3 and to evaluate its impact on students' progression and the quality of their learning.

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

Awareness and relevance of D&T to students and parents are good with some outstanding features.

- Parents and students enthusiastically support the vision for D&T and see its relevance to developing skills for life and work. Parents give their views about their children's work: this is demonstrated exceptionally well in relation to food technology. Students' and parents' views are acted upon to modify learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring best practice is shared to develop outstanding learning and progress, challenge students' thinking and promote independence as learners
- monitoring and evaluating the Key Stage 3 curriculum to bring greater coherence to planning progression and to reduce duplication.

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

As I explained previously, 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