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Mr K Barr
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Barr

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 pupils, during my visit on 1 March 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 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.

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

The overall effectiveness of D&T is satisfactory.

Achievement in D&T

Pupils' achievement in D&T is satisfactory.

- A good range of activities in the Nursery and Reception classes gives children the opportunity to develop their use of simple tools, for instance, by using small hammers and nails to join a variety of materials together in the outdoor workshop area. Pupils continue to make at least satisfactory progress in a range of D&T-related activities to reach generally expected outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 6. The progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory.

- Pupils are enthusiastic about D&T because activities are interesting and they have opportunities to make things that they are proud of. The subject provides some good opportunities for the development of personal and social skills. For example, pupils in Year 6 can work well in pairs to design a sign for a local park. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 state that they find D&T enjoyable because it is practical and teachers link D&T activities with other subjects to make learning even more interesting.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is satisfactory.

- Lessons observed during the visit confirm that teachers use questions effectively to probe pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking further and the learning seen in the four parts of lessons during the visit were good. Resources are used well and adults provide good levels of support to pupils with specific needs. Teachers demonstrate appropriate levels of subject knowledge and an enthusiasm for the part D&T can play in motivating and engaging pupils in their learning. Good opportunities are planned for links with other subjects such as literacy and history.
- However, the assessment of pupils' progress in D&T is an area for further development. It is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage where staff make ongoing observations of significant learning in D&T-related skills. There is currently no whole-school approach for recording pupils' achievements in D&T. The proposed system that builds on the good practice evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage is a positive development.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- An appropriate range of D&T activities provides adequate opportunities for the development of knowledge and understanding in Key Stages 1 and 2. Units of work are planned to link D&T with other subjects whenever possible to make learning more relevant to pupils. However, the absence of a clear structure for the development of D&T-related skills means these learning activities do not always build progressively on skills previously learnt. Suitable activities are provided for pupils to develop and communicate their ideas and make products of satisfactory quality using a range of tools and components. Teachers in Key Stage 1 provide pupils with good opportunities for them to evaluate the quality of their products formally and suggest how they might be improved. This is not consistent practice across Key Stage 2 in all units of work.
- A good range of enrichment activities ensures D&T plays an important part in the school's drive to make the curriculum more creative. Pupils' participation in mask making as part of an art and design themed week, maintaining the school garden and designing improvements for the school playground all contribute extensively to achievement in D&T.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are satisfactory.

- Leadership and management of D&T are developing well and subject leaders demonstrate good capacity for improving the overall quality and range of learning experiences for pupils. Much work has been undertaken to implement a dynamic curriculum, with a strong emphasis on D&T being the key link between many subjects. However, self-evaluation in D&T is quite limited. As a result, subject leaders are not in a strong position to prevent learning from becoming too fragmented for pupils.

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

Awareness and relevance of D&T to pupils and parents are satisfactory.

- Discussions with pupils confirm they find D&T relevant to their needs because they enjoy making things and solving problems. The oldest pupils note the relevance of D&T to their next stage of education and working life. The involvement of parents and other members of the local community in teaching D&T-related skills further enriches the quality of pupils' D&T experiences.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the range of planned activities provides clear progression of skills in D&T
- providing opportunities for all pupils in Key Stage 2 to conduct a formal evaluation of the quality of the products made
- implement manageable assessment procedures that:
 - effectively record the pupils' achievements in D&T
 - support planning for the next stages in pupils' learning
- ensuring that self-evaluation is used to:
 - monitor the quality of provision effectively
 - identify areas for further improvement to raise pupils' outcomes.

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

Philip Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector