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15 March 2010

Ms S Tring
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Tring

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 4 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

Achievement in D&T

Pupils' achievement in D&T is good.

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with limited D&T-related skills. Well-planned and imaginative activities enable them to make good progress in using simple tools such as scissors to carefully cut paper and card. They can use these materials creatively to make simple products they are proud of, such as cardboard baskets. This provides a good foundation for future D&T work.

- Progress is good across the school in a wide range of D&T-related skills. Nearly all pupils attain the expected levels by the end of Year 6. Well-planned activities provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their D&T skills in making products of quality. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the key process of planning, designing and making. Their evaluations are detailed and demonstrate the importance of this key process.
- Pupils enjoy their work in D&T and are very proud of the products that they make. They learn how to use simple tools safely and are developing a good awareness of how to keep healthy, such as through making a fruit salad in Year 3. Older pupils demonstrate well-developed personal and social skills when working in small groups to undertake investigations as part of their research before designing and making powered vehicles.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is good.

- All teaching is at least good with some outstanding practice evident for pupils in Year 3. Lessons are planned well and organised effectively to ensure resources are readily available. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. They use questions well to determine pupils' understanding and to challenge their thinking even further.
- Staff provide good support and guidance for pupils in D&T lessons. This is especially so for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose first language is not English.
- The procedures for the assessment of pupils' progress in D&T are limited and an area for development. Pupils keep photographs of the products in their records of achievement. However, there are no formal procedures for assessing the overall achievement of pupils in D&T.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- An exciting and varied curriculum provides good opportunities for the progressive development of D&T skills in many areas. Teachers link D&T very effectively with other aspects of the curriculum. The clear identification of D&T skills for each year group ensures that pupils make consistently good progress as they move through the school.
- Well-planned units of work provide a good balance to the overall curriculum. Appropriate use is made of information and communication technology in D&T. Older pupils develop good skills in the control and manipulation of motorised models. Participation in the 'challenge club' and 'holiday homework' activities effectively enriches pupils' learning.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are good.

- The subject is led well. Curriculum leaders demonstrate a clear vision for the place of D&T within the overall curriculum. It is shared effectively with all staff and evident within the wide range of experiences planned for the pupils. Monitoring and self-evaluation supports school improvement effectively.

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 good.

- D&T is given a high profile within the curriculum and is often used to introduce new learning experiences in other subjects. As a result, pupils demonstrate a clear view of D&T and its relevance to their lives.
- 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:

- developing a manageable assessment system that records pupils' achievements in D&T effectively.

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