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10 May 2010

Ms A Potter
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Potter

Ofsted 2010-11 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 27 and 28 April 2010 to look at work in 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 and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

Achievement in D&T

Students' achievement in D&T is good.

- Students join the school with broadly average starting points and achieve above average results in D&T. A trend of improving GCSE results is well-established and the proportion of girls achieving the highest grades increased significantly in 2009. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well.
- Students enjoy D&T hugely and this is demonstrated very well in their excellent behaviour and attitudes. Their adoption of safe working practices was outstanding in the lessons observed. Students are developing their awareness of moral issues and the implications of designing for different cultures. However, some students remain dependent on their teachers'

guidance and opportunities are required for them to take responsibility and progressively demonstrate independence as learners.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching of D&T is good.

- Lessons are generally planned well and teachers' good organisation and management of resources and equipment contribute effectively to learning. Students know what is expected of them and apply themselves diligently to meeting teachers' expectations. Teachers make good use of their specialist D&T knowledge and probing questioning techniques challenge students' thinking and promote their engagement in learning. In a few lessons, opportunities to develop students' designing and making capability were constrained by tasks which focused too closely on decoration at the expense of opportunities to fully explore and create well-designed products. In such lessons, opportunities to further develop students' independent learning skills were missed.
- A variety of assessment activities are well planned within the scheme of work and are used effectively to monitor students' progress. Students' work is regularly marked and feedback is generally useful and informative. Students are guided to plan and assess and are becoming confident in evaluating their own work.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- The curriculum draws well on recent initiatives, such as 'Licence to Cook'. Opportunities for students to apply scientific and mathematical knowledge and understanding are being forged through competitions, events and activities. These enrich students' experiences and develop their awareness of exciting applications of designing and making and different contexts for such work. As a result, students see their work in D&T as highly relevant to future careers and their acquisition of life skills. Students are aware of some inventions and products that they see in the world around them and are beginning to draw upon them to develop innovative and unusual ideas to inform their designing and making.
- The school's vision for D&T reflects the importance of preparing students for a technologically advanced society. Recent reviews of the curriculum have enabled the school to begin to tackle the lack of electronics, systems and control by developing modules of work to ensure that this increasingly important aspect of D&T forms part of students' experience at Key Stage 3. However, this aspect is not covered sufficiently in the current curriculum and action to maintain teachers' knowledge has not kept pace with technological developments in this specific area.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are good.

- The strengths in leadership are firmly demonstrated in an improving track record of students' achievement, the consistent application of school monitoring systems, good-quality resources and secure inclusive practice. The subject leader has made excellent use of research to inform assessment practice and her classroom practice is excellent. Monitoring and evaluation ensure consistency across the D&T team in implementing health and safety risk assessments and contribute effectively to an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses.
- Students reflect on their work and are happy to give their views. The department is using this well to inform decisions and amendments to some modules of work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring teachers consistently plan opportunities for students to develop independence in their learning
- ensuring teachers are confident and competent to teach systems and control more fully at Key Stage 3.

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 under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector