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Mrs C Forsyth  
Headteacher  
Woodham Community Technology  
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Dear Mrs Forsyth

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 7 and 8 June 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 without their consent.

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

The overall effectiveness of D&T is satisfactory.

Achievement in D&T

Students' achievement in D&T is satisfactory.

- Most students start Year 7 with skills and capabilities in D&T which are similar to those normally found. Achievement is satisfactory, largely because students' progress has significantly improved in the last year. Evidence from the visit confirms the school's view that far more students are on track this year to gain higher GCSE grades at Key Stage 4.
- The school's predictions for 2010 indicate results should be above average and the recent changes to provision have still to make their full impact. GCSE results in 2009 were best in resistant materials. Current monitoring shows a more consistent picture across all D&T subjects with Specialist College targets met and exceeded.

## Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and improving.

- Plans and schemes of work are appropriately constructed to develop D&T capability. The proportion of satisfactory and better teaching is growing and the school knows that further increasing the proportion of good teaching in D&T is a high priority to sustain improvement. Teachers' subject knowledge is valued and respected by students.
- D&T work is becoming more challenging. For example students individually designed and made torches in Year 7 using computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment, such as laser cutters. Assessment practice has improved and progress is monitored more effectively. The department is rightly planning to analyse D&T attainment on entry in more depth through rigorous baseline assessment when students finish their first project.

## Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- D&T activities help students to gain experience of a sound range of materials. Plans are well advanced to reintroduce food technology when the refurbishment is completed in September. Students' needs are well met and they experience a variety of appropriate D&T programmes. These include GCSE engineering delivered in partnership with South West Durham Training Centre. Students enjoy creating original designs and making prototypes, particularly with a higher standard of accuracy and precision.

## Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are good.

- Strong leadership by senior managers and a new head of department has resulted in much change in the last year. The subject's performance is evaluated accurately and areas for development are understood. The right actions required to ensure the subject continues to improve have been identified and implemented. Leaders and managers at different levels are working well as a team to make sure D&T continues to improve.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the proportion of good and better teaching
- continuing with plans to:
  - reintroduce food technology in the autumn term
  - analyse D&T attainment in more depth when students start in Year 7.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Hancock  
Her Majesty's Inspector