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Mrs P Hibbert
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hibbert

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 29 and 30 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 good.

Achievement in D&T

Students' achievement in D&T is good.

- Many students have D&T skills and capability below those normally found when they start at the school. They make good progress and attainment is average by the end of Year 11. The best GCSE results in 2009 were achieved in textiles and food. All groups of students make equally good progress, but those with special educational needs and/or disabilities sometimes make exceptional progress, particularly in resistant materials and food. Students are mature and enthusiastic when discussing their experiences in D&T and say they thoroughly enjoy practical work.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is good.

- The school's analysis of D&T teaching is accurate. Quality is underpinned by individually planned and delivered lessons. Teachers expect good standards of work which encourages students to design and make products with accuracy and precision. Subject knowledge is good and the new facilities are valued and respected by students.
- Students' progress is monitored and the school is aware that baseline assessments in Year 7 would help to identify underachievement early on. More rigorous use of assessment information to plan the next steps in D&T learning is currently being developed.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- Activities at Key Stage 3 encourage a practical approach to design work using food, textiles and resistant materials. D&T work is frequently characterised by well-presented and finished products. Students work maturely in a well-organised and managed learning environment and enjoy taking full responsibility for creative and original design ideas.
- Good links with art and information and communication technology enhance learning and are a feature of the curriculum. The school is rightly anticipating more development in the next year as a result of changes in subject leadership and management.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are satisfactory.

- The senior leadership team is strong and effective in its support for D&T. Self-evaluation has accurately identified the need to improve subject leadership to continue raising achievement. A new head of department will take up post next term with a clear remit to ensure provision improves and that self-evaluation is more rigorous.
- Evidence from the visit confirms the school's view that standards are set to improve further as a result of proposed changes in the way D&T is led and delivered. Teachers and support staff work closely as a team. They have a clear and appropriate vision for D&T which is translated effectively into practice.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the quality and effectiveness of subject leadership
- introducing baseline assessments in Year 7 using practical design and make projects.

I hope that 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

Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector