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Mr C Salmon
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Salmon

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 pupils during my visit on 13 September 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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

Achievement in D&T

Pupils' achievement in D&T is good.

- Before they join the school, pupils' experience of modelling is very mixed. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage develop very good levels of independence. They learn basic skills and develop good design and making capabilities.
- Pupils make good progress in lessons. They learn to work in teams, demonstrate good reasoning skills and develop autonomy. They can demonstrate how to make good decisions, plan effectively, evaluate carefully and have the confidence to raise questions of their own. For example, they gain a good understanding about the importance of aerodynamics in the design of rockets and how a change in air pressure

brings about propulsion. They do this by evaluating the shape and design of space rockets through research, practical demonstrations and their own investigations. Most pupils can easily plan a project once given a design brief.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching is good.

- Teachers have a good understanding about the nature of D&T and its relevance to the world. Outstanding practice is emerging in teaching and learning. All pupils enjoy their lessons and see themselves as successful designers and makers.
- Very good adult support is provided for pupils for whom manual dexterity and hand-eye coordination present a challenge. A wide range of learning resources, good planning, adult confidence and enthusiasm ensures pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- Cross-curricular projects are successful in consolidating pupils' learning. For example, pupils develop their knowledge of electricity and circuits and use this in models such as making torches. D&T activities also complement and enhance the development of numeracy skills where their knowledge of fractional parts and ratios is used to calculate quantities of ingredients in food technology.
- The application of knowledge related to the world of work, engineering, science and sport is planned carefully. However, opportunities are missed to prepare pupils for an increasingly technological society by ensuring that they have experience of investigating technologically advanced materials that respond to their surroundings.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are outstanding.

- Your visits to other schools, including those in Switzerland and France, to share best practice ensure that teachers are kept up to date with current thinking in D&T. The partnership work with the local grammar school ensures that gifted and talented pupils and those in Years 5 and 6 have high-quality extended D&T experiences through working with the sixth formers on projects using computer-aided design and manufacture.
- Self-evaluation is good. Monitoring and evaluation are securely established with a clear focus on learning and raising attainment. Planning for health and safety is secure.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring pupils have more opportunities to experience materials that have responsive properties so that they that can be significantly changed in a controlled fashion by external stimuli.

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 published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector