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Dr P Hazlewood
Headteacher
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Dear Dr Hazlewood

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 4 and 5 October 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; observation of 12 lessons; and meeting with the Eco-challenge Team after school.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

Achievement in D&T

Students' achievement in D&T is good.

- Most students start Year 7 with skills and capabilities in D&T that are in line with expectations for their age. In Key Stage 3, excellent student attitudes to learning are encouraged by enthusiastic and hard-working staff. This cooperative learning environment ensures that students enjoy what they are doing and generally end each module with work that is completed to a good standard.
- As a result of specialist status, nearly all students study an aspect of technology at GCSE. Standards at GCSE continue to be significantly above the national average, particularly at the highest grades. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are at risk of exclusion

or disaffection achieve as well as their peers as a result of highly effective support and guidance they receive in lessons from teachers and support staff.

- Students enjoy their D&T lessons and this is reflected in the rapidly increasing take-up of courses post-16 where achievement is also good. D&T makes an excellent contribution to students' personal development and their emotional and economic well-being.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is good.

- Students are able to learn for themselves and create individual, and increasingly innovative, project work in D&T. This is because teachers have excellent subject knowledge and can adapt activities effectively to meet individual students' needs. Outstanding practice is emerging in teaching and learning.
- End-of-project assessments ensure that students know the National Curriculum level that they have attained, how they can improve their work, and how to reach the next level. However, some of the assessments do not encourage students to aim for the highest levels.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- Cross-curricular project weeks are successful in consolidating students' learning. Projects, such as the Year 7 leaflet dispenser, also ensure that external visits, in this case to Bristol Zoo, are fully exploited with excellent reinforcement of learning and skill development in D&T, literacy, numeracy and science.
- A wide range of courses, of varying types and levels, successfully meets the needs of students, particularly in Years 10 to 13. 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. Students also need greater access to technologically advanced machining techniques to enhance their understanding and making capabilities.
- After-school clubs and entrance to competitions, contribute very effectively to enriching opportunities for students' learning. The variety and high-quality of this work contributes significantly to students' enjoyment and understanding of the relevance of D&T, and their emotional well-being.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are outstanding.

- D&T is exceptionally well led by the head of department. She and her cohesive, able team have established a clear vision for D&T. Excellent use is made of the subject leader's expertise to develop high-quality resources

and guidance to support new and experienced teachers in teaching D&T confidently and safely. The impact of this work is demonstrated in significant increases in students' achievement and standards. Effective systems are in place to regularly monitor and evaluate teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that all students have more opportunities to experience technologically advanced materials
- providing more first-hand experiences of technologically advanced manufacturing processes in all year groups.

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