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Mrs N Gill
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Gill

Ofsted 2011–12 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 24 May 2011 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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is satisfactory.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is satisfactory.

- From very low starting points when they enter school, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. All groups of pupils are fully included and make progress similar to their peers.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make sound progress in developing basic skills and are able to choose materials and select tools. Recent assessments show that attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is below average. The main reason for this is that some pupils find it difficult to talk about their ideas. As pupils progress through Key Stage 2, their attainment improves to become closer to average, but is still below age-related expectations.

- Pupils' attitudes to D&T are positive and they talk enthusiastically about D&T activities. However, pupils in Key Stage 2 identify that they would welcome more experience of using and joining wood.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching is satisfactory.

- Although the lessons that were sampled were generally good, the overall quality of teaching varies, and the wider impact it has on learning and progress overtime is satisfactory. Senior leaders' evaluation of teaching accurately identifies where teaching is most effective.
- Pupils are encouraged to make choices about materials and how they will be used. However, at times, choices are limited and pupils are occasionally over directed by adults. Relationships are positive and pupils are motivated to produce their own models and pieces of work. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to develop pupils' understanding of computer-aided design (CAD) and to enhance D&T more widely is underdeveloped.
- Teachers are confident and their subject knowledge is generally secure. However, there is confusion about the similarities and differences between D&T and art in some activities. Questioning is used well to check on pupils' understanding and prior knowledge. Teaching assistants are generally deployed well and offer good support to individuals. However, they have received little or no training and, consequently, miss opportunities to develop pupils' D&T-specific skills, knowledge and understanding.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and a varied range of resources helps children to develop their skills. The outdoor area is used particularly well to develop their early problem-solving skills and to foster cooperative working.
- The curriculum is sound. It is based on national guidance and offers pupils experience of a range of materials. However, within Key Stage 2, the use of control technology and resistant materials is not consistently planned for all pupils. Pupils' experiences in using real products to evaluate their function are underdeveloped.
- The school's approach to curriculum planning ensures that there are links between subjects. D&T is used well as the basis for developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. D&T topics are contributing securely to the school's drive to improve writing; but leaders are aware that more could be done.
- A particular strength is the use of themed days. For example, the theme of sustainability has been used well as the starting point for the annual fair and enabled older pupils to design and make outfits using recycled materials.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

The effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T is satisfactory.

- Subject leadership is developing, and plans to support this further are in place. The subject leader is keen to develop the role. Senior staff have a largely accurate view of strengths and weaknesses and a clear view of the role that D&T can play in the school to engage and enthuse pupils, and to support improving standards in literacy.
- The monitoring of pupils' levels of attainment and progress is sound. Annual pupil reports mention D&T successes, and the school's plan to indicate levels of attainment against nationally expected standards are a positive step.
- The subject leader has collected pupils' views about D&T. However, the formal monitoring and evaluation of pupils' attainment and progress across the school and of the quality of provision are underdeveloped.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing the skills of staff and their understanding of the nature of D&T
- increasing opportunities for using ICT in D&T, including the use of CAD packages
- planning more opportunities for pupils to investigate or evaluate real products
- developing the skills of the subject leader at judging and influencing standards and progress in D&T, including the monitoring of lessons.

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

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector