

24 January 2006

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Dear Mr Panayi

Ofsted survey inspection programme – design and technology

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10-11 January 2007 to look at work in design and technology.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

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

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness of design and technology was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and Standards

Achievement and standards in design and technology are satisfactory.

- On entry to the school, pupils' attainment in design and technology varies depending upon their Key stage 2 experience; however, their general attainment is broadly average. Key Stage 3 results this year were above average; nine out of every ten pupils attained Level 5 or

above with four out of every ten gaining Level 6. By the end of Year 9, pupils' progress and achievement are generally good. However, pupils do not develop their knowledge and skills to a similar standard across all of the specialist areas of the subject due to the limited experience they have of some areas.

- The proportion of pupils achieving A*- C grades in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in 2006 was below the national average overall and the proportion gaining A*-A was half the national average. In Key Stage 4 there is variability in pupils' attainment and achievement across the specialist areas of the subject. In food technology, pupils' attainment is above average, in graphics it is average, in resistant materials it is below average and in textiles well below average. Overall, in respect to their starting points on entry to the school, pupils' progress and achievement from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 are satisfactory; in food technology they are good though in textiles they are barely adequate.
- Results in advanced level design and technology examinations are below the national average, however, pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory in respect to their attainment on entry to the sixth form.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in design and technology is satisfactory.

- Much teaching is good but it is not consistently good enough to ensure all pupils' progress and achievement are good. Teachers generally plan and prepare lessons well based on clear learning objectives and outcomes. They include a suitable balance of teacher exposition and pupil activities. Their explanations, instructions and questions are clear. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and they provide extensive support for pupils during practical work.
- Some lessons seen were not planned effectively to make best use of the time available. Tasks set to pupils did not always focus on developing the most relevant knowledge and skills. For example, in one lesson that included product analysis, there was too much emphasis on basic observations such as colour, price and label description than on the way the product had been constructed. In some lessons, there was limited questioning or the pace was slow. Overall, teachers did not emphasise sufficiently their expectations of high standards or motivate pupils sufficiently to achieve them.

- Assessment in the subject is satisfactory. Well devised monitoring and recording procedures are employed which provide pupils with a clear picture of their progress and attainment. However, setting pupils individual targets and providing them with guidance on what they need to do to improve is more limited, particularly at the end of units of work in Key Stage 3. The use of assessment for learning is embedded well in some areas of the subject such as food technology.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- In Key Stage 3, a range of units of work are offered that cover all of the National Curriculum Programme of Study for the subject. However, pupils undertake a different combination of units each year due to the way the timetable is organised. As a result, some pupils undertake up to three units on the same area and some do not cover an area at all. Combined with the carousel model of delivery this significantly reduces the continuity and progression in pupils' learning and some pupils do not cover the Programme of Study adequately. The content of the Key Stage 3 units of work is generally suitable but some of the projects undertaken have little relevance to the needs and interests of pupils, particularly in the resistant materials units.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum is planned to provide an appropriate framework for meeting examination requirements. Information and communication technology (ICT) is integrated effectively in units of work in both key stages. However, pupils use of computer aided design and computer aided manufacture (CAD/CAM) is limited, particularly in Key Stage 4.
- Teachers are generous with their time in providing pupils with opportunities for additional practical work after the school day. Occasional subject related visits, entry in national competitions and extra activities for more able pupils in food technology adds interest to pupils work, though overall, opportunities to enrich the design and technology curriculum are underdeveloped. No design and technology activities are undertaken with pupils from feeder primary schools to ease their transition from the Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.

Leadership and Management

Leadership and management in design and technology are satisfactory.

- The head of design and technology and other staff with management responsibilities for the subject demonstrate a concern to achieve high

standards and are committed to doing this. The day to day operation of the subject is conducted effectively. Resources and accommodation are managed well to create a productive working environment; good quality displays are used to aid this. Schemes of work for all areas of the subject are maintained and they contain clear guidance to staff on how to deliver them. Regular staff meetings are effective in creating a team ethos.

- However, the use of assessment data to monitor and analyse the performance of the subject is underdeveloped. Very little analysis is done in respect to Key Stage 3 results and analysis of pupils' performance in Key Stage 4 is too descriptive and not analytical or diagnostic enough. Action points arising from this analysis lack specificity and mainly centre on the provision of more time for completing course work rather than modifications to teaching and learning. Design and technology staff have insufficient knowledge of national standards in the subject and of pupils' starting points to judge their relative performance in the different specialist areas of the subject and to set suitable targets for improvement. However, analysis has rightly identified the impact of weaknesses in the Key stage 3 curriculum on pupils' performance in the GCSE.
- The current development plan for the subject identifies a number of relevant areas for improvement but is insufficiently focussed on raising pupils' achievement and standards, particularly in Key Stage 4. Good features include further implementation of the Secondary Strategy for design and technology, increased use of CAD/CAM and the need for staff to attend more professional development in respect to teaching GCSE courses. However, the plan is not suitably expressed as objectives to achieve and success criteria do not include specific targets for improved examination results.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising achievement and standards in the subject, particularly in resistant materials and textiles
- making the quality of teaching and learning more consistent
- ensuring all pupils experience similar coverage of the National Curriculum Programme of Study and better continuity and progression in their learning in Key Stage 3
- reviewing the relevance of some units of work in Key Stage 3 to the needs and interests of pupils
- increasing the use of assessment data to monitor and analyse the performance of the different areas of the subject and to set targets for improvements

- defining more specifically the proposed action and success criteria in subject development plans and focusing them more sharply on raising pupils' achievement and standards.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop design and technology in the school.

A copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority, and will be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Nick Green
Her Majesty's Inspector