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Mr K Holt
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Dear Mr Holt

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on the 2-3 October 2007 to look at work in Design and Technology (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. 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 five lessons.

Design and Technology

The overall effectiveness of D&T was judged to be inadequate.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are inadequate.

- At the end of Key Stage 3 the evidence for judging the attainment of pupils is deficient because not all the required work has been covered, and due to the erratic staffing of the subject, records are incomplete. In consequence attainment is below average and achievement is below that expected.
- At GCSE level standards are mixed, with results in 2007 being variable depending on the area followed. In D&T Graphic Products, 15 pupils were entered with 20% gaining A* to C grades and 87% A* to G grades. In

D&T Resistant Materials, nine pupils were entered and 56% gained A* to C grades and 89% A* to G. Overall the achievement of pupils at the end of their school career compared with their attainment at entry is not as high as it could be because of the inconsistent teaching and curriculum provision year on year.

Quality of teaching and learning in D&T

Teaching and learning in D&T are unsatisfactory overall because of staffing difficulties.

- The school has been through a period of difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff in design and technology. Creative approaches have been tried including taking on overseas trained teachers and training them in house. This has taken both management time and expertise to enable new recruits to gain the skills and knowledge required to teach the English National Curriculum. However, the rate of turnover of these teachers has undermined the quantity and the consistency of teaching.
- At the time of this visit there was a substantive head of department, a food specialist and a short notice supply teacher who is qualified in graphics and resistant materials. The teaching seen was never less than satisfactory and sometimes good. The most notable feature of the provision was the good relationships that exist between the pupils and their teachers, even a teacher who had been in the school only for a few days. Behaviour is managed through a kind and friendly approach that encourages pupils to give of their best. One pupil said, 'every day is a new experience in D&T', and all his fellow students agreed that it was always one of the best lessons of the week.
- Lessons generally move with a good pace and pupils make sound progress. They are often encouraged to contribute to the lesson and their answers are built upon to encourage other pupils to contribute. Pupils enjoy the challenge and are proud of their contribution to their learning. During these activities teachers constantly observe, discuss and ask questions to ensure that all pupils make progress. Pupils are encouraged by their teachers to return at break time or after school to get additional support and guidance. Teachers then give freely of their time.
- Formal assessment is unsatisfactory and assessment for learning systems are insufficiently robust to give pupils accurate feedback of where they are and provide guidance of where they should aim. A structured approach is lacking. As a result information from different teachers of design and technology is not well joined together to form a good overview of what pupils know, understand, and can do.
- Project work is insufficiently structured with each section being completed, assessed and with targets set for improvement. Too much of the ongoing work is in note form which will waste time later when it has to be prepared for final assessment. Students are given too partial a view of their overall work because their coursework, a very large amount of the GCSE award, has not been adequately prepared or assessed, although

their attempts at sample examination papers show good knowledge and understanding.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is inadequate due to its limited coverage.

- At Key Stage 3, the amount of time for the subject is significantly less than in most similar schools. This reduces the opportunities for developing the full range of knowledge, understanding and skills as laid down in the National Curriculum. The statutory requirements are not met because structures, systems and control, as well as computer aided design and manufacture, are not studied sufficiently. Additionally, pupils do not have enough experience of designing and making in a wide enough range of materials, for example in plastics. Pupils are able to study and produce a good range of food products in line with the national recommendation. Currently pupils are insufficiently guided to form the links between their different experiences, for example how different materials behave when they are cut.
- At Key Stage 4, pupils are offered a good range of courses in food studies, graphic products and resistant materials. However, not all the classes run in all years due to a shortage of take up. They start the course from a low base compared with most other schools and have to make good progress to achieve a C grade.
- What is clear is that pupils enjoy design and technology, and particularly making things. They are happy to contribute because they feel that their views and experiences are valued and that all the other pupils, and particularly their teacher, will listen to them and respect their background and cultures. This encourages racial harmony and understanding.

Leadership and management of D&T

The management of design and technology across the school is unsatisfactory because the provision is inadequate.

- The D&T department is satisfactorily led overall. It is very effective in encouraging pupils to use knowledge gained at home and to share it in school.
- The department's lack of stable and full staffing limits the coherence of the curriculum and the effectiveness of assessment. Not all pupils are provided with all the experiences required in the National Curriculum. This limits their achievement especially at the higher levels of which they are capable.
- Target setting has been too inaccurate to contribute fully to the raising of standards.

Inclusion

Inclusion is good within D&T.

- In the earlier years teaching groups are organised by mixed ability and a lower attaining group is extracted. This included some challenging pupils and was managed very effectively. The support of the learning assistant in the classroom helped all pupils so that they could contribute and make progress. Older pupils are given good individual support to match their needs, and teachers encourage pupils to come back at lunchtimes or after school for one-to-one support.
- The range of pupils' ethnic heritage is used as a strength in the subject, particularly in food studies, where pupils are encouraged to share with the class their knowledge of different foods that they eat and how they are prepared at home. Other pupils listen avidly and respectfully, and appreciate that each can make their own contribution.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- in Key Stage 3, review, develop and provide sufficient time, staff and resources to deliver all areas of the National Curriculum as required so that pupils achieve their potential
- identify more clearly the role of D&T, including the 14-19 Diplomas, in the curriculum and provide whole school management to make it fully effective
- develop target setting and formal assessment procedures so that pupils know where they are, to what they should aspire, and how they can achieve their target.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop D&T in the school.

A copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Lyons
Additional Inspector