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Mr I Adam
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Adam

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 6 December 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory and quickly improving.

- Students start at the school with broadly average attainment in D&T. The impact of recent change in the subject can be seen in the more rapid progress students are making in lessons at all key stages.
- GCSE results in 2007 are best in Food Technology and improving in the other D&T subjects. Evidence from the visit indicates the trend of improvement is continuing, and is confirmed by school predictions for higher D&T results in 2008.
- D&T is making a very good contribution to students' personal development and well being. They say having more responsibility for

their own learning, particularly when engaged in individual design and make project work, is very enjoyable.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in D&T is good.

- Teaching and learning seen is consistently good across the key stages. Subject knowledge is up-to-date and this helps the teachers command the respect of students. Resources are wisely chosen within the constraints of cost and storage. The consistent and high quality team support and teaching across the subject is an excellent feature of the work in the department.
- Work is rigorously assessed and students are provided with clear feedback on how well they are doing. Performance in the different aspects of the subject, for example analysis and evaluation, is differentiated and well aggregated into overall performance scores. Progress is closely monitored and data thoroughly analysed to identify underachievement at an early stage.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Recent changes to the arrangements at Key Stage 3 have improved quality. Students' needs and interests are well catered for and they use a good variety of components and materials when designing and making.
- The curriculum is very well planned and organised given the constraints of managing practical work in sixty minute lessons. Both students and teachers say it is frustrating having to stop practical activities when they are fully engaged in project work.
- Other good features of the improving curriculum are the systematic development of design skills, the use of up-to-date tools and equipment, and the use of industry-related contexts for project work.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of D&T are good.

- The good quality subject leadership and the way it is well managed are making a strong contribution to improvement in D&T.
- The quality of self evaluation is accurate at all levels and well evidenced.
- The school's management capacity to ensure design and technology can thrive is very good and, together with the excellent team ethos, is significantly helping to raise achievement and standards.

Inclusion

The pattern of boys taking resistant materials GCSE courses, and girls food technology, is changing for the better. Pupils with learning difficulties are fully supported and make similar progress to other groups of pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- sustaining the recent improvement in achievement and standards
- considering the short length of D&T lessons and the limitations it can set on progress during practical work.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your Local Authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector