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Mrs J James
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Dear Mrs James

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 2–3 July 2009 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 you, the subject leader for D&T, 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

Pupils' achievement is good and they reach below average standards.

- Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is significantly well below national expectations for their age with most working towards Level 1. From this starting point pupils make good progress overall. Many achieve Level 1 and some achieve Level 3 by the end of Year 9. Pupils follow instructions well. They learn how to hold equipment and the importance of measuring accurately. Pupils work with a range of food, textiles and resistant materials and begin to develop a basic understanding of their properties, acquire techniques and use them with increasing confidence. In food technology pupils make decisions and develop the confidence to modify recipes and develop original flavours. More able pupils know about healthy ingredients. Pupils' designing skills such as research and product analysis, developing

design ideas and planning their work are weaker aspects of their performance.

- All pupils continue to study D&T in Key Stage 4. School records show pupils make good progress, particularly in practical skills and consistently achieve entry level qualifications in resistant materials. Pupils continue to have many opportunities to cook and to follow their interests. They develop independence in cooking and most pupils say they are confident to make a snack or meal for themselves by the end of Year 11.
- Some pupils continue their studies in D&T post-16 and enjoy exercising their own choices to make products. Pupils who are new to the school and those who wish to improve their grades work hard and achieve entry level certificates in one year.
- Design and technology makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils enjoy D&T: they act safely and behave sensibly in the food room and workshop. They take pride in learning the correct technical terms such as brazing and in acquiring technical skills such as using a sewing machine. By the end of Year 9 many can use them independently.

Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.

- Teachers' subject knowledge, management and preparation of practical sessions and teaching of health and safety and hygiene are strengths of the teaching. Teachers and learning support assistants are skilled in quickly engaging pupils in tasks and the provision of all materials enables a smooth start to lessons. Relationships between staff (teachers, LSAs) and pupils are good and pupils are confident in asking for help. A pupil said, 'If they are dealing with someone you wait. But they stay with us until we are sure about what we are doing and then they move on'.
- Teaching and learning are characterised by effective use of a wide range of teaching strategies: for example 1:1 support, effective questioning and step-by-step demonstrations. Pupils say they like to learn in this way although further opportunities to introduce exciting ways to develop pupils designing skills and to challenge the thinking of more able pupils would usefully enhance current work.
- Food technology lessons are well paced and closely matched to pupils' needs and interests. They enable pupils to make decisions about the ingredients they will use and to develop skills in working collaboratively and to deadlines.
- Pupils do not know how well they are doing, although they like to get house points.

Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum meets requirements and provision for food technology at Key Stage 3 is outstanding. The good practice of developing pupils designing and making skills in food technology is insufficiently shared across all parts of D&T. Currently opportunities for pupils to make functional products in textiles and to learn about sustainability and designing skills are insufficiently integrated in curriculum planning.
- Nonetheless pupils like the products their teachers plan for them to make in Years 7-9. They are finished to a high quality and many pupils choose to take them home. Pupils enjoy the wider choices they have from the end of Year 9 to develop their own ideas to solve specific problems and make functional products.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to pursue individual interests and to make original responses. However the opportunity is missed for pupils to have their achievements in food technology recognised in qualifications at Key Stage 4
- The curriculum is enriched by the opportunities for pupils to learn about how products work in world around them. Pupils use computers to present their work but opportunities to develop their understanding of current technology through the use of computer aided manufacture are currently limited.

Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are good.

- Your support for D&T and that of senior staff is well demonstrated in your clear overview of the subject's strengths and weaknesses and in the provision of resources. The need to develop computer aided design and manufacture is budgeted for in the plan.
- The subject leader has a good overview of D&T and self-evaluation is accurate. Developments to collaboratively plan and assess part of the Key Stage 3 curriculum are underway in some aspects but are at an early stage.
- Staffing, accommodation, resources and provision for food technology are very efficiently managed. Tasks are pitched well to pupils' needs and have a very good impact on the quality of their work, decision making, independence and personal development.
- The school uses its membership of subject networks effectively to participate in subject training and to stay updated on national and local developments.

The extent to which the school promotes awareness and relevance of D&T to pupils and parents and carers

- The school has a clear vision for D&T. Older pupils see relevance to their D&T work: they say it helps them to be patient, to work safely and to act responsibly. They say these skills are relevant in their work placements.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring pupils have an opportunity to progress in food technology to obtain qualifications at Key Stage 4 and beyond
- integrating planning and assessment of D&T fully in order to develop a shared approach to the teaching of core designing skills at Key Stage 3.

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

As explained in the previous letter, 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

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector
Subject Adviser for Design and Technology