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Mr J Senior
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Senior

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: design and technology (D&T)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 13 and 14 December 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is satisfactory.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is satisfactory.

- Most students make satisfactory progress at the end of Key Stage 3 to reach standards that are broadly in line with national expectations for their age. Students are developing a rudimentary understanding of the needs of users through their analysis of contemporary products. They are developing a basic knowledge of the properties of traditional materials and an understanding of some processes, including computer-aided design and manufacture.
- Some students continue to study GCSE courses in D&T after Year 8 through options that provide two years of study, or in a single year in Year 11. Above average attainment is established in D&T and most students

meet the targets the school expects of them. However, attainment and progress vary between courses and the gap between boys and girls remains wide. The support and preparation students receive for D&T examinations are extensive, extremely detailed and assist them in achieving pass grades.

- Students' learning and progress in lessons are satisfactory. They are well motivated, persevere with tasks and are engaged in their courses. Students follow instructions and act safely; by Year 10 some students are becoming confident and demonstrate independence in using tools and equipment. Although students' construction skills show a degree of accuracy, few demands are made of them to consistently work with precision or to fine tolerances. This limits their understanding of excellence in designing and making. Some students are developing responsibility for leading teams and improving their own performance; this is demonstrated well in the hospitality and catering course.

Quality of teaching in D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is satisfactory.

- Teachers expect students to work hard and positive relationships between staff and students are well established. Objectives are generally clear and shared but sometimes focus on what students will do than on what they are intended to learn. The most effective teaching is well planned with tasks and activities that progressively deepen knowledge and secure students skills. This is well demonstrated in hospitality and catering. However, not all of the teaching observed was of this standard. In some lessons, tasks and activities are poorly matched to students' needs. Teachers do not monitor students' learning sufficiently to allow adjustment of plans and the pace of activities. Consequently this slows learning for some students.
- Students are regularly informed of their progress. They find that the most helpful marking and dialogue with teachers occurs during projects. It is timely and they find it encouraging. Homework is appropriate and completed by most students: they say it helps to influence their design ideas. On occasions, opportunities were missed to use it in lessons, for example to share different methods of research across the class to help students to see and understand what is expected of them to achieve higher levels.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- Schemes of work based around projects and units of work are in place. The school is refining them further to take account of changes to Key Stage 3 and to provide further flexibility to develop new courses at Key Stage 4. Students know what is expected of them in GCSE courses, as a result of the extensive and detailed guidance and resources they receive. Links with the hospitality and catering industry help students to

understand the relevance of their courses and they provide valuable insights that help them in reaching decisions about their next steps in education and employment. For example, experience of running a restaurant and working to a budget makes an excellent contribution to enrich students learning.

- Opportunities for students to practice essential literacy and numeracy skills are established but are less so in using scientific and engineering knowledge and skills. Projects do not explore a sufficiently wide range of contexts to enable students to understand and question how the technological developments taking place around them are used to bring about improvements in meeting the needs of users. Opportunities for them to use modern and smart materials and to learn how computer-aided design and manufacture are applied in local industries are underdeveloped.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

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

- Systems, including those to monitor and track students' progress, are established and secure the cooperation of teachers. The subject leaders' monitoring and evaluation are extensive and students' and parents' views inform departmental plans. The school knows where developments are needed to secure consistency in teachers' practice, and support and training are planned.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that tasks and activities are consistently matched to the needs of all students and learning is monitored by teachers during lessons to secure better progress and attainment
- updating the curriculum to ensure that all students learn about modern scientific and technological developments and have opportunities to enrich and apply their learning in a range of engineering, health and social contexts.

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

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector