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Mr M MacCourt
Headteacher
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Dear Mr MacCourt

Ofsted 2012–13 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 23 April 2012 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 two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is satisfactory.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is satisfactory.

- Students join the school with levels of skill and knowledge that are generally much lower than those seen nationally for their age. Most students make satisfactory progress, although there are variations with occasional inadequate and outstanding progress. Attainment at GCSE is steadily increasing with one student in 2011 getting the first grade B in D&T in the school.
- The subject provides good opportunities for the development of personal and social skills. For example, in a food technology lesson students learnt how to make a healthy meal demonstrating that they could use kitchen equipment safely and confidently. Students state that they find D&T enjoyable when lessons are practical and particularly when activities result in products that they can use at home or food they can eat.

Quality of teaching in D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is satisfactory.

- Teaching is satisfactory with some good practice in the use of resources and in adults' encouragement. This allows students to persevere and to work without direct adult help. Students are encouraged to make choices about materials and how they will use them, for example the meals they will create. However, they are not always well-informed decisions as students do not have a clear enough understanding about how these choices can limit or enhance their levels of attainment.
- Teachers and teaching assistants demonstrate satisfactory levels of subject knowledge. The assessment of students' progress is a relative weakness. The judgements made on the overall levels that students attain are accurate and moderated with other schools. However, the systems currently used do not assess students effectively against specific D&T-related skills and knowledge.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- A satisfactory range of activities provides appropriate opportunities for the development of skills, but these do not always build progressively on those previously learnt. However, each unit of work provides suitable activities for students to develop and communicate their ideas and make products of satisfactory quality.
- Planned links with other subjects are underdeveloped. In particular, literacy and numeracy are not sufficiently targeted in lessons with the result that the interdependence on these and D&T skills are not highlighted to students or their learning enhanced.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

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

- The school demonstrates a clear vision for improvement. For example, the new well-equipped food room has significantly increased the opportunities for dishes to be produced and greatly improved the learning environment. Another example is that the monitoring of teaching and learning has led to improvements in students' achievement and behaviour.
- Links with other schools for moderation and peer support are good. The school has rightly identified the need to enhance staff's range and depth of skills and knowledge so that more opportunities are available to students; for example, by increasing the number of staff with food-hygiene health and safety accreditation.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- implementing assessment procedures that:
 - effectively record the progress that students make in all aspects of D&T
 - support planning for the next stages in students’ learning
- ensuring that the range of planned activities provides clear progression of skills and knowledge in D&T
- making D&T more relevant to students’ lives by ensuring that:
 - activities and projects have clearly identified and planned links with other subjects
 - all lessons effectively support students’ individual literacy and numeracy targets.

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

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty’s Inspector