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Mr M Tull
Headteacher
Marsden Heights Community College
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Dear Mr Tull

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 16 and 17 May 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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is satisfactory.

Achievement in D&T

Achievement in D&T is satisfactory.

- Attainment when students start in Year 7 is well below average. Achievement is satisfactory and attainment at Key Stage 3 is improving. GCSE results are below the national average and students make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Different groups of students, such as the high number on free school meals and from minority ethnic backgrounds, make similar satisfactory progress.
- Students' ability to make is better developed than their ability to design. There is a strong emphasis on learning technical knowledge such as running stitch and how to cut a housing joint. Students are less well challenged to learn design skills alongside making skills and apply them in depth when thinking through their own design work. This is an aspect of

the subject that they thoroughly enjoy and especially the opportunity to take responsibility for their own design ideas.

Quality of teaching in D&T

The quality of teaching in D&T is satisfactory.

- The school accurately evaluates teaching to be satisfactory and knows the capacity to improve quality is constrained by a lack of consistent specialist teaching over time. Lessons and work are effectively managed to make sure that all students make best use of the time available. The quality of team support and help for individual students is a good feature when they are engaged in practical work.
- Work is assessed and a well-embedded school monitoring system is providing information for D&T teachers to analyse individual progress and identify students who are underachieving. Methods are being explored of gathering accurate information when students start in Year 7 to improve the continuity of their learning and development of design skills.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- Schemes of work ensure that students have opportunities to develop a practical approach to making products using textiles, resistant materials, and food. New facilities are well equipped and provide a rich learning environment for product design, catering and computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM). The school knows that the use of the up-to-date tools and equipment is an area to develop together with industry-related contexts for project work.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

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

- Senior and middle leaders are supporting improvement in the drive to raise achievement. Self-evaluation of the subject and performance is accurate. Teachers and support staff work closely together as a team and have a vision for D&T which is effectively translated into practice. New initiatives are being introduced to raise the profile and value of the subject in the community. For example, organising a Year 9 evening for parents, carers and students linked to the STEM project.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- challenging students to learn design skills at an earlier age and apply them in more depth
- introducing more consistently good specialist teaching over time
- making full use of equipment and resources using industry related 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

Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector