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Dr P Kelley
Headteacher
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Dear Dr Kelley

Ofsted 2010-11 subject survey inspection programme: design and technology (D&T)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 26 and 27 April 2010 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

Achievement in D&T

Students' achievement in D&T is good.

- Many students join the school in Year 9 with skills and capability which are below those normally found. Achievement is good and improving as a result of recent changes in subject delivery and a move to a new building. Attainment has steadily improved in the last five years and results in 2009 were close to average. The progress made by all groups of students, including boys and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is faster due to the recent changes. For example, boys find the up-to-date computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment and the industry-standard food preparation area more relevant and motivating to their future aspirations.

Quality of teaching of D&T

The quality of teaching of D&T is good.

- The school accurately evaluates the quality of teaching in D&T. Good subject knowledge encourages innovative design work and well made prototypes of original design ideas. Students' ability to learn for themselves through individual D&T project work is a strong focus of the well-organised and delivered lessons. Action is being taken to develop D&T more quickly, for example, by increasing the amount of teaching time in Year 9 and making delivery more consistent.
- Assessment practice is effective and students know how well they are doing. Subject leaders are planning to monitor students' performance in more depth and use assessment information to further increase the rate of progress.

Quality of the curriculum in D&T

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

- Activities meet students' needs and interest well. They enjoy learning in D&T and the new facilities are well matched to course requirements following major contributions from D&T staff to their design and delivery. Students respect the very well organised and managed learning environment which provides them with easy access to the resources they need, for example when engaged in computer-aided design work.
- The range of materials and components used to design and make products is appropriate and subject leaders have rightly identified more use of systems and control equipment as an area to develop in the drive to provide a wider curriculum.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in D&T

Leadership and management in D&T are good.

- D&T strengths and areas for development are well known and subject performance is accurately evaluated. Senior leaders and subject managers continue to move the subject forward with the aim of further raising achievement and results. The D&T team works closely together to ensure all students' D&T capability is fully developed.
- The awareness and relevance of D&T to students and parents is good. The vision for the subject is shared at parents' evenings, through displays of work, and in adult learning classes.
- Classroom leadership and management are very effective in providing a stimulating and well-organised learning environment.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the amount of time, challenge and pace of learning in Year 9

- developing a wider curriculum to include more use of systems and control components when designing and making products.

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

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector