

## Editorial

Underlying all the uncertainty which currently surrounds the teaching of design & technology there is a fundamental issue which concerns the continued presence of the subject at Key Stage 4. It is at this key stage that all the achievements of the earlier key stages should be consolidated, and why the current uncertainty surrounding the future of technology at KS4 itself inevitably has an impact on the subject throughout all key stages. Any decrease in the status of technology at KS4 cannot fail to diminish its status with younger pupils.

Publication of the draft revised order for technology is imminent, and this will be a crucial opportunity to influence the direction of the final order. It may also be the last chance to 'get it right' in the foreseeable future, so response is vital. Many schools have almost put technology 'on hold' and lack a coherent (or even visible) strategy for D&T work with pupils aged 14+. They believe that short courses as currently presented will deliver a ready-made pack of instructions, even though there is no evidence that this will happen. Confusion over GCSE course entries and ways of preparing candidates for them just add to the uncertainty, and handicap attempts to develop coherent courses that will demonstrate that D&T is a crucial part of the whole curriculum.

Unless we achieve coherence in this area, a large part of the gains of the last decade will be at risk. And in order to achieve that coherence, we need as professionals in D&T teaching to take as wide a view of technology as possible: if we focus too closely on a subset of the subject, we are in danger of losing sight of what is happening to the subject as a whole.

For many secondary schools this is also a time of inspection by OFSTED. Increasingly, the work of D&T departments is being influenced by the perceived requirements of inspection, which serves to highlight the fact that technology as a subject is not well suited to an inspection of only one week's duration. As a skill-based area of the curriculum, D&T is particularly vulnerable to the 'snapshot' aspect of inspection. We urge that the process of inspection should help to identify best practice, as previous HMI inspections did. We need to identify that best practice and to disseminate it so that technology teaching moves forward as a whole.

*Design & Technology Teaching* urges its readers, whether in schools or higher education, to address these issues and to discuss them with colleagues. The editorial board welcomes both comments and examples of good practice so that we — and DATA as an organisation — can develop strategies in this crucial area. Issues such as these need to be central in our journal and at DATA's conference in June, so that all members of the profession are aware not only of the problems but also of ways forward.

*The Editorial Board*

### ■ Articles urgently needed

DATA has been commissioned to produce a publication to support the DFE's IT in D&T GEST Programme. We are therefore keen to receive articles and case studies relating to good practice in the use of information technology in design & technology.

This embraces all aspects of IT — handling and communicating information, modelling, control, CAD and CAM — within the full range of D&T activities. If you are successfully using IT to support your teaching, let us know what you are doing, how you got started, what equipment you have found useful and what lessons you have learned. The deadline is 24th June.

Articles should be 1000–1500 words in length and (where possible) supported by photographs or illustrations.