

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mr M Brett  
Durham Gilesgate Sports College and Sixth Form Centre  
Bradford Crescent  
Gilesgate  
Durham  
DH1 1HN

Dear Mr Brett

**Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: information and communication technology (ICT)**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 4 and 5 October 2010 to look at work in ICT. Thank you for allowing Jordi Boada to shadow this inspection.

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 six part-lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT is inadequate.

**Achievement in ICT**

Achievement in ICT is inadequate.

- Baseline testing done at the beginning of Year 7 shows that the students' ICT attainment on entry is low. Between Year 7 and 11, some students make satisfactory progress; these students reach levels of attainment which are below the national average. However, too many students make inadequate progress in ICT during their time at the school. These students do not meet the realistic targets which are set for them. The progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities varies. Although some of these students make satisfactory progress, too many of them do not do so.

- Given the large numbers of students in Years 7 to 11 making inadequate progress, achievement is inadequate.
- In the sixth form, the levels of attainment vary. However, given the students' starting points they make satisfactory progress.
- In lessons, and during study periods, the students treat the ICT equipment with respect.
- Students have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of what they need to do to keep themselves safe while using new technologies. This knowledge and understanding has been developed through assemblies, ICT lessons and other lessons.

### **Quality of teaching in ICT**

The quality of teaching in ICT is inadequate.

- In too many ICT lessons, the pace is too slow. This means that students do not always make even satisfactory progress. Often students are all asked to complete the same work. This work is too challenging for some students, who do not complete it, and too easy for others. Students who find it too easy finish it quickly then engage in low level disruptive behaviour.
- Assessment is inadequate. It does not highlight what the students have done well and what they need to do to improve. Assessment is not used effectively to plan lessons and provide the students with activities which challenge them. The assessment of the students' work is overgenerous and means that the leaders and managers of ICT do not have an accurate view of where the students are, and what they need to do to reach their targets.
- The use of ICT to support learning across the school is good. The students have good access to ICT and, in lessons, it is used constructively and unobtrusively to support and develop their learning. In a Year 10 PE lesson, students logged data in various ways and were able to discuss well the advantages and disadvantages of the techniques they had used.

### **Quality of the curriculum in ICT**

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is inadequate.

- The curriculum in the sixth form is satisfactory; it meets the needs and interests of the students. Students are also able to access a wider ICT curriculum through all subjects. They are also supported with access to many ICT resources, in particular the dedicated sixth form learning resource centre.
- At Key Stage 3, the students study ICT for an hour a week and in Key Stage 4 all students study ICT for two hours a week. However, the curriculum is too focused on the aspects of communication and presenting

information. The opportunities for the students to develop their knowledge and understanding of other aspects of ICT are limited. The curriculum does not provide all students with their entitlement to the statutory ICT National Curriculum and is limiting the progress that students can make.

### **Leadership and management of ICT**

The leadership and management of ICT is inadequate.

- Senior leaders and managers have a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of ICT. An action plan is in place, which is clear and links to outcomes for students. However, this plan has been highly dependent on support from the senior leadership team and has only recently been implemented. It is too early to judge the impact of the plan on improving the outcomes for students.
- The leaders and managers of ICT rely on purchased schemes which do not meet the needs and interests of the students. The department focuses very little on how to improve teaching to ensure that students make satisfactory progress. These two factors are contributing strongly to the inadequate progress which the students are making.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- ensuring that all students, regardless of their academic ability, make at least satisfactory progress by:
  - providing students with activities in lessons which challenge them and they are able to complete
  - improving the quality of assessment by making sure that it gives students clear areas for improvement which they can act on
- focusing the leaders and managers of ICT on ensuring that:
  - the curriculum provided meets the needs and interests of the students
  - the teaching of ICT is improved and becomes at least satisfactory.

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

As I 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. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Tanya Harber Stuart**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**