

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)



13 May 2011

Mr T Ryan  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic High School, Business and Enterprise College  
Harrington Road  
Workington  
Cumbria  
CA14 3EE

Dear Mr Ryan

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit with my colleague Eric Craven HMI, on 8 and 9 February 2011 to look at work in ICT.

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 12 lessons, including five observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.

The overall effectiveness of ICT is good.

**Achievement in ICT**

Achievement in ICT is good.

- The students start Year 7 with levels of ICT attainment which are broadly in line with the national average. By the end of Year 11, the pass rate in terms of A\* to C grades is broadly in line with the national average. However, the proportion of students achieving A\* or A grades is significantly above the national average. Overall, students make good progress with some making outstanding progress.
- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported very well in ICT lessons. The good quality of teaching and the structure of

the course mean that students make at least good progress with some achieving much higher grades in ICT than in their other subjects.

- Students behave well when using ICT equipment. In all the lessons seen, when they were using new technologies they respected each other, the staff and the equipment. The relationships between staff and students when using ICT are excellent.
- Students are supported to learn how to become safe and responsible users of new technologies through assemblies and links with the local police.

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

The quality of teaching in ICT is good.

- All teachers, regardless of whether they are teaching ICT as a subject or using it as a tool to enhance learning in other subjects, are confident about using new technologies. Staff have good ICT subject knowledge and they use this well to plan lessons which engage and motivate the students to make good progress. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on control, sequencing and programming, the students were challenged to improve their games. They had to explain what they were doing and why they were doing it. In addition, students had to demonstrate their completed work to the others. The challenge and pace of the lesson meant that students made good progress not only in developing their ICT knowledge and understanding but also in their presentation skills.
- Students are supported to develop their independent learning skills when using ICT. They are confident about using new technologies in any context.
- The ICT staff have very high expectations of the students. This leads to lessons being planned which enable students to make at least good progress.
- The assessment of ICT work is good at Key Stages 3 and 4. Students know what they have done well and what level/grade they are on. They also know what they need to do to improve their work. The individual support that students receive in lessons is very good and is appropriate to their needs regardless of their prior academic ability.

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

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is satisfactory.

- All students receive their entitlement to the statutory ICT National Curriculum. However, the curriculum is not balanced and some students have a far better ICT curriculum than others depending on the options they take. Although the ICT coverage across the school is secure, the impact of using ICT in other subjects is not monitored.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT**

Leadership and management in ICT are good.

- There is a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of ICT. Monitoring of the work of the department is regular and constant improvement is demanded of both the staff and the students. As a result, over the past three years, students' attainment has risen and achievement has increased. Of particular note is the improvement in the proportion of students achieving A\* or A grades and the progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A sustainable rolling programme of replacement is in place.
- A virtual learning platform (VLE) is in place but it is not used effectively by the staff and students. This has been recognised and a plan of action is in place to ensure that a more effective VLE is embedded.

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

- embedding the VLE and monitoring its impact on outcomes for students
- developing the curriculum to ensure that the use of ICT in other subjects is monitored and its impact known.

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**