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Mr K Gibson
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Gibson

Ofsted 2011–12 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 on 7 and 8 June 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 eight lessons including one observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.

The overall effectiveness of ICT is outstanding.

Achievement in ICT

Achievement in ICT is outstanding.

- Students begin in Year 7 with levels of attainment which are slightly below the national average. By the end of year 9, they are achieving above the national average and, by the end of Year 11, are well above the national average and have made outstanding progress. Students are highly enthusiastic users of new technologies in ICT lessons and in other curriculum areas.
- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported very well in ICT lessons and by teaching assistants at other times. High-quality support and access to ICT facilities mean that these students make outstanding progress.

- Students' behaviour in ICT lessons is outstanding and this makes a significant contribution to their progress. They listen to each other and work well either in groups or independently. In all lessons seen, when using new technologies they respected each other, the staff and the equipment.
- Students are supported to learn how to become safe and responsible users of new technologies through tutor time and assemblies. Governors are fully involved in the monitoring of the e-safety policy.

Quality of teaching in ICT

The quality of teaching in ICT is outstanding.

- All teachers of ICT and those who use it in their teaching have excellent subject knowledge and are highly confident users of ICT. Teachers plan in detail lessons which challenge, engage and motivate students of all abilities.
- The relationships between staff and students are excellent. Staff communicate high expectations to students and lessons are an outstanding environment for students to learn.
- Students are confident and positive about using new technologies. They are encouraged by teachers to develop independent learning skills through paired and group working. For example, in a Year 7 English lesson on instruction writing, students worked through a range of interactive ICT activities which they then had to explain to their partners, supporting their learning and enabling them to develop their collaborative learning skills.
- The use of ICT to support learning across the school is outstanding. Students have very good access to ICT and use it appropriately in many lessons to develop their learning.
- The assessment of work in ICT lessons is outstanding; students are given clear guidance on what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work.

Quality of the curriculum in ICT

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is outstanding.

- All students at Key Stages 3 and 4 receive their entitlement to the statutory ICT National Curriculum during ICT lessons. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and updated to make it more challenging, interesting and enjoyable to the students. In addition, students have very high-quality opportunities to use ICT in all subjects.
- The curriculum provided at Key Stage 4 is appropriate and includes a range of accreditation routes including the ICT Diploma, which teachers in the school have developed in partnership with colleagues from other schools. The school has well-developed plans to extend the curriculum choice to meet the needs of more able students.

- Students have access to an excellent range of enrichment activities which promotes their learning and engagement with the subject. The school has a virtual learning environment which provides students and staff very good access to their work and the schools' learning resources at all times.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT is outstanding.

- ICT is very well led at both departmental and senior management levels. The vision for the subject is highly effective and there is a school-wide expectation that ICT is used to enhance learning in every lesson.
- The standard of self-review and evaluation is outstanding. There is a constant cycle of review, evaluation and action leading to the outstanding progress made by students. Governors are fully involved in monitoring both the work of the ICT department and the use of ICT throughout the school.
- The use of data both at school and classroom level to raise standards and improve provision is outstanding. This is having a significant impact on students' achievement and has led to improvements in the ICT curriculum.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the school's detailed and well-considered plans for ICT are implemented to ensure that it continues to have a very high profile in the life of the school and continues to make a significant impact on students' achievement.

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

David Brown
Additional Inspector