

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Mr A Perry
Headteacher
Christ The King Catholic Maths and Computing College
Lawrence Avenue
Frenchwood
Preston
PR1 4LX

Dear Mr Perry

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 21 and 22 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 two observed jointly with members 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 in ICT which are below the national average. By the end of Year 9, they are achieving in line with the national average and, by the end of Year 11, are well above the national average. This represents outstanding progress.
- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported to achieve very well in ICT lessons by teaching assistants and make similar outstanding progress to their peers. The use of ICT to support the learning of students whose first language is not English is very effective in raising their attainment across the curriculum.

- Students' behaviour in ICT lessons is good and they are highly enthusiastic about the subject and opportunities to work independently. The relationships between staff and students when using ICT are excellent.
- Students are supported to learn how to become responsible users of new technologies through tutor time and assemblies and have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Quality of teaching in ICT

The quality of teaching in ICT is good.

- All teachers of ICT have excellent subject knowledge and use this to plan activities which engage and motivate students. Teachers use an excellent range of resources to develop the independent learning skills of students. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on desktop publishing, students were fully engaged in producing professional quality illustrated pages for a teenage magazine.
- The relationships between staff and students are excellent. Teachers have high expectations and lessons are a positive environment for students to learn.
- ICT is used innovatively to support more vulnerable students. Excellent work was observed to support students whose first language is not English and high-quality resources were used to support students with a severe visual impairment.
- The assessment of work in ICT lessons throughout the school is excellent. Students are very aware of their termly targets and their teachers ensure that they know how to achieve them. As a result, almost all students achieve or exceed their challenging targets.
- The quality of ICT to support learning across the school is more varied. Students have very good access to ICT in other subjects but its use is not coordinated with the ICT curriculum and in some lessons this lowers the expectations of teachers and limits the progress made.

Quality of the curriculum in ICT

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is outstanding.

- All students at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 receive their entitlement to the statutory ICT National Curriculum during ICT lessons. The ICT curriculum is regularly reviewed and updated to make it more challenging, interesting and enjoyable to students. This proactive approach to the curriculum contributes to students' outstanding progress.
- The Key Stage 3 curriculum has been designed to ensure that all students are engaged and motivated and each unit of work provides a stimulating mix of experiences. All students begin to study the OCR National award in Year 9 and the department is highly flexible in offering a choice of units to meet the needs of individual students.

- Students have access to high-quality opportunities to use ICT in other subjects and an excellent range of enrichment activities is used to promote students' learning and their engagement with the subject. The school has a virtual learning environment (VLE) which provides students and staff with very good access to their work and the school's learning resources at all times. The use of the VLE to support student voice in the school is outstanding.

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 ICT is highly effective and there is a clear and shared understanding of the strengths and areas for development. Evaluation of the work of the department by senior leaders and governors is regular and accurate and, as a result, attainment is rising and achievement is increasing.
- The use of data 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.
- Access to ICT equipment in the school is excellent. The use of the VLE is enhancing students' achievement across the curriculum and has contributed to their outstanding progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the teaching of ICT in other subjects is improved to at least good by developing systems to enable the use of ICT in these lessons to be 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

David Brown
Additional Inspector