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Ms A Palmer  
Principal  
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Dear Ms Palmer

**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 5 and 6 July 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 seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT is good.

**Achievement in ICT**

Achievement in ICT is good.

- Students begin in Year 7 with levels of attainment in ICT that are below the national average. By the end of Year 11, they are achieving in line with the national average. This represents good progress. In the new sixth form lesson, observations indicate that students are making similar good progress.
- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported very well and have excellent access to ICT facilities. High-quality support at all times means that these students make good progress.
- Students behave well in ICT lessons. They listen to each other and work well either in groups or 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 the ICT curriculum and through tutor time and assemblies. Students have a very 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 developed through the comprehensive training on offer to staff at the academy. Teachers plan lessons which engage and motivate students. In the better ICT lessons observed, the students worked independently with a wide range of resources whereas in less effective lessons teaching focused too much on the development of basic skills.
- The assessment of work in ICT lessons is good. Students are aware of their end-of-unit targets and their teachers ensure that they know how to achieve them.
- The quality of ICT to support learning across the academy is more varied. Students have good access to ICT in other subjects but its use is not monitored and this can limit the progress made. In one Year 12 mathematics lesson, students used graphing software to improve their understanding of trigonometric functions but in some curriculum areas the use of ICT is limited to simple research and opportunities are missed to improve progress.

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

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is good.

- All students at Key Stages 3 and 4 receive their entitlement to the statutory ICT National Curriculum during ICT lessons. The curriculum is reviewed regularly and has been recently updated to increase the challenge to students. Students now begin to study the Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) National award in Year 9 and this has improved their engagement with the subject.
- The academy uses a number of partnerships effectively to raise achievement in ICT. A local arts centre provides excellent resources and teaching to engage students with a unit on using ICT to create high-quality animations.
- The academy is developing a virtual learning environment (VLE) which will provide students and staff with access to their work and learning resources at all times. This improved access is contributing to the good progress of students in the sixth form.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT is good.

- ICT is well led at both departmental and senior management levels. Monitoring of the work of the department is regular and effective self-evaluation is leading to improvements in the ICT curriculum and raising student achievement. Senior leaders and managers have a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject and significant progress has been made over the last two years as the academy has developed. ICT has a high and increasing profile in the academy.
- Access to equipment in the academy is excellent. The academy provides regular opportunities for student support at lunchtime and at before- and after-lesson clubs. All sixth-form students are provided with a netbook which can be used at home and in lessons. This is enhancing students' achievement across the curriculum and has contributed to their good progress.
- Well-planned and engaging training has been provided for all staff and this has enhanced their ICT knowledge and understanding.

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

- improving the quality of students' learning and their progress in ICT throughout the academy by:
  - sharing best practice in using assessment information to enable differentiated activities to take place in ICT lessons
  - developing the VLE to enable all students to have better online access to curriculum resources
  - 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 academy.

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.

Yours sincerely

**David Brown**  
**Additional Inspector**