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Mr M Garbett
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Garbett

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: information and communication technology (ICT)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit with Jeremy Spencer HMI on 1 and 2 February 2012 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 including four 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 which are above the national average. By the end of Year 9, they are achieving 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. A very large majority of students continue their studies in the sixth form and access to high quality and challenging ICT experiences in all curriculum areas encourages significant numbers to study ICT-related courses at university.

- 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.

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.
- The relationships between staff and students are excellent. Staff communicate high expectations to students and lessons are an outstanding environment for students to learn in.
- Students are confident and positive about using new technologies. They are encouraged by teachers to develop independent learning skills through paired and group working, and regularly assess the work of their peers. For example, in a Year 9 geography lesson, students prepared a video on an economically disadvantaged country which was uploaded to a host site so that the class and parents could view their work.
- The use of ICT to support learning across the school is outstanding. Students have very good access to ICT and use it appropriately in lessons to develop their learning.

Quality of the curriculum in ICT

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is outstanding.

- All students at Key Stage 3 receive their entitlement to the statutory ICT National Curriculum during ICT lessons. The ICT curriculum throughout the school is regularly reviewed and updated to make it more challenging, interesting and enjoyable to students. The recent addition of a project to design a touch-screen music application has increased access to higher levels in Year 9. This proactive approach to the curriculum contributes to students' outstanding progress.
- At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, students experience high-quality opportunities to use ICT effectively through a carefully planned and monitored curriculum, taught through all school subjects and supported by an excellent range of enrichment activities. For example, the use of ICT to support the work of students within GCSE and A-level media studies leads to outstanding progress.
- 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.
- ICT lessons and assemblies support students in learning how to become responsible users of new technologies. In an outstanding assembly on e-

safety, the Head of Year used excellent resources, supported by examples of recent school issues with cyber-bullying, to clearly explain the importance of this area. Discussions with students confirm that they have a very clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

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 clear and highly effective, including a school-wide expectation that ICT is integrated into learning in all areas of the school and that up-to-date technology is used by all teachers.
- The standard of self-review and evaluation is outstanding. A constant cycle of review, evaluation and action leads to the outstanding progress made by students.
- 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.
- Well-planned and engaging training has been provided for all staff and this, together with outstanding support from staff in the ICT department, has enhanced their knowledge and understanding.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the school's well-considered plans for ICT are implemented so that the subject continues to innovate, to have a very high profile in the life of the school, and makes a significant impact on students' achievement in all curriculum areas.

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

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

David Brown
Additional Inspector