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Sister B Wallace
Headteacher
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Dear Sister Wallace

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 on 7 and 8 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 good.

- Students begin in Year 7 with levels of attainment which are slightly above the national average. By the end of Year 11 they are achieving above the national average and have made good progress. The school is developing the curriculum to increase the challenge to more able students and evidence of good and improving achievement was seen during lessons.
- 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 means that these students make good 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 when working either in groups or independently. Students are creative and imaginative, show a well-developed understanding of ICT, and have developed excellent transferrable skills.

Quality of teaching in ICT

The quality of teaching in ICT is outstanding.

- Teachers of ICT have excellent subject knowledge and plan in detail lessons which challenge, engage and motivate students. In one Year 10 lesson the teacher took time to introduce a new topic by using the examination board website to carefully explain to students the level of work required to attain the highest grades. The students were keen to begin the task and their excellent progress was supported by outstanding behaviour and highly effective support from the teacher.
- All teachers using ICT 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 and regularly assess the work of their peers. For example, in a Year 7 'integrated learning' lesson, students worked in groups to prepare a video news broadcast which was displayed around the school so that all students and teachers 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 lessons. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and updated to make it more challenging, interesting and enjoyable to the students. The recent addition of a fashion project in Year 9 has increased both interest in the subject and access to higher levels.
- The ICT curriculum provided at Key Stage 4 is appropriate and includes a range of accreditation routes. The school has plans to develop the curriculum choice to better meet the needs of more able students.
- Students have access to high quality opportunities to use ICT in other subjects and an excellent range of enrichment and curriculum extension 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 schools' learning resources at all times.
- ICT lessons and assemblies, some involving external speakers, support students in learning how to become highly responsible users of new

technologies. 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 highly innovative and effective and a school-wide expectation is that ICT is integrated into learning in all areas of the curriculum.
- The standard of self-review and evaluation is outstanding. New initiatives are fully trialled and evaluated before being introduced throughout the school.
- Access to ICT equipment in the school is outstanding. The school provides regular opportunities for student support in ICT at lunchtime and before and after school.
- The use of mobile technologies in the sixth form is enhancing students' achievement across the curriculum and is contributing to significant improvements in their progress. The school has plans to extend this access to Key Stage 4 students in the near future.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- further improving the quality of students' learning and their progress in ICT by:
 - implementing planned developments in the ICT curriculum in order to increase challenge and interest in the subject for students
 - ensuring that ICT continues to have a 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