

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



15 March 2012

Mr S Taylor
Headteacher
Kirkby College
Tennyson Street
Kirkby-in-Ashfield
Nottingham
NG17 7DH

Dear Mr Taylor

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 5 and 6 March 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.

The overall effectiveness of ICT is good.

Achievement in ICT

Achievement in ICT is satisfactory.

- Students begin school with standards in ICT that are below average. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has risen over the last three years to be a little under national average, although only a few students achieve higher levels. Students do not achieve well in programming, data logging and some aspects of media because the curriculum and software applications available to them limit their attainment.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 have risen over time and are now more closely in line with national averages. All students are entered for a vocational award and a significant number achieve the equivalent of one GCSE, but few achieve better than this. Progress across both key stages has improved in the last three years, particularly for students with special

educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are entitled to free school meals. Currently, a significant number of students in Year 10 are in line to achieve or exceed their target grades.

- Students' responses to teaching are often outstanding. They are keen to learn and they work well together when provided with opportunities to do so. They know their targets and what to do to achieve a higher grade. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent and contribute to good progress. Students are good at listening and are not slow in coming forward to speak, but their speaking skills are not well developed.

Quality of teaching in ICT

The quality of teaching in ICT is good.

- The quality of ICT teaching has improved in recent years. A clear focus is on making sure that students understand the objectives and outcomes for the lesson. Teachers share assessment criteria with students so that they know what they have to do to achieve a higher grade. However, sometimes this form of teaching leads to lessons that are too teacher-led, at the expense of paired or group work which would improve students' speaking and general literacy skills. Teachers' subject knowledge is good; they pose questions and answer them well, but sometimes students do not have the opportunity to speak in an extended way. Starter activities and planning for errors and misconceptions are also used but not as a regular part of teaching. Relationships are good in lessons and teachers often use gentle humour to challenge students to achieve more.
- The use of ICT as a tool to learn is variable across and within subjects. Teachers of other subjects often use ICT to support their teaching but this is limited by the lack of interactive whiteboards. Teachers use portable technology well in their learning, for example in a science lesson students were challenged to use a website to assess the impact of stimulants on reaction time.

Quality of the curriculum in ICT

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is satisfactory.

- The Key Stage 3 curriculum covers most of the National Curriculum programme of study and includes some work on media. It is compressed into two years and is being developed further as a basis for study in Key Stage 4. However, students' achievement is limited by the lack of application software that would allow them to more easily achieve at the higher levels in a range of areas. Some concepts and skills that are taught in ICT lessons are not built on by other subjects.
- All students follow a vocational ICT course in Key Stage 4 and some choose to study it further as an option. This is planned well so that no repetition occurs in the course content. The school is currently considering how to best provide more choice in Key Stage 4, given that it is a small school with relatively limited ICT resources. Sixth form ICT courses take

place at another school in the consortium, although few students study ICT at advanced level.

- The use of ICT across the curriculum is dependent upon individual teachers and is therefore variable. Opportunities are available for students to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of ICT, but not in any coordinated way. The ICT that students use in other curriculum areas does not contribute to their overall assessment of ICT capability. Teachers and students across the school use the network well to support teaching and learning but as yet, no virtual learning environment (VLE) that would allow access to ICT resources outside the school is provided.
- E-safety is focussed on in each year of the Key Stage 3 ICT programme and this, together with work during assemblies, personal and social development lessons and visits from the community police officer, has a satisfactory impact.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT is good.

- Leadership and management have addressed underachievement and poor teaching. Achievement has improved over the last three years, especially for students with special needs and / or disabilities and for those who qualify for free school meals. The school analyses student data very well and uses this to set and monitor targets which underpin much of the teaching. Staffing issues have been resolved and the school is now much better placed to teach an effective ICT curriculum. Resources have been targeted well to provide an effective and stable ICT infrastructure supported by mobile technologies for both staff and students. This has been managed against a background of funding limitations.
- The ICT department is led well with effective support from senior leaders who are very accurate in their assessment of teaching and learning. Self-evaluation is good and uses evidence from a range of sources, including student perceptions; it leads to a development plan that focuses on the whole-school priorities. Some, but not extensive, sharing of ICT planning is in place between other curriculum areas and the ICT department.
- Given the progress made over three years, the school shows good capacity to improve ICT further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the curriculum in Key Stage 3 to provide a better foundation for students to make choices about Key Stage 4, by introducing an improved range of application software, especially in programming, web design and aspects of multimedia
- improving curriculum continuity and progression in ICT across the school by sharing and coordinating the opportunities students have to apply and extend their ICT knowledge, skills and understanding

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

John Williams
Additional Inspector