

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



23 March 2012

Mr J Watson
Headteacher
Oulder Hill Community School and
Language College
Hudsons Walk
Rochdale
OL11 5EF

Dear Mr Watson

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 13 and 14 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 nine lessons including two observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.

The overall effectiveness of ICT is satisfactory.

Achievement in ICT

Achievement in ICT is satisfactory.

- Students begin in Year 7 with levels of attainment which are at the national average. By the end of Year 9, they have made satisfactory progress and are achieving in line with expectations. In Year 10, all students follow a vocational ICT course whereas in Year 11 a GCSE course is also an option. Students in Key Stage 4 continue to make satisfactory progress.
- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well in ICT lessons. High-quality support, at times in small nurture groups, and good access to ICT facilities mean that these students make similar progress to their peers.

- Students' behaviour in ICT lessons and in other subject lessons where ICT is being used is good. When given the opportunity, students work well together. The relationships between staff and students are good.

Quality of teaching in ICT

The quality of teaching in ICT is satisfactory.

- ICT teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident users of ICT. Teachers understand the examination and assessment criteria very well. In better lessons, teachers plan work which engages and motivates students but in many lessons, all the students were asked to do the same tasks. This lack of differentiation, together with a lack of challenge and pace, reduces student engagement in the subject. In less effective lessons, teaching focuses too much on the development of basic skills and opportunities are missed for group or paired work.
- The use of ICT to support learning across the school is variable. For example, in one Year 11 engineering lesson, the excellent resources available and the high-quality ICT skills of the teacher led to outstanding progress with students able to confidently describe the advantages and disadvantages of computer-aided design. Although students have good access to ICT in other subjects, its use is not coordinated with the ICT curriculum and in some lessons this lowers the expectations of teachers and limits the progress made.
- The assessment of work in ICT lessons is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4; students are aware of their progress and know what they need to do to improve their work.

Quality of the curriculum in ICT

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is satisfactory.

- Students in Key Stage 3 receive their entitlement to the statutory ICT National Curriculum during ICT lessons. However, the scheme of work takes little note of the ICT carried out by the students in primary schools and as a consequence lacks challenge and limits progress.
- The vocational curriculum provided at Key Stage 4 is appropriate for many students but does not challenge or enthuse the more able. The school has plans to develop the Key Stage 4 curriculum to increase choice and better meet the needs of these students.
- The virtual learning environment is used well in some curriculum areas and is having a positive impact on student achievement.
- Students are supported to learn how to become responsible users of new technologies through ICT lessons and the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum. They have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The impact of this teaching on the students' understanding of e-safety is good.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT is satisfactory.

- Senior leaders and managers have a good overview of strengths and weaknesses in ICT. They are well informed of current developments in the subject and effective self-evaluation has informed the ICT development plan. They are aware that the current curriculum does not challenge students to achieve the highest levels and does not promote independence and plans are in place to change this in the near future.
- The subject leadership of ICT is satisfactory. Some key points for development which would improve teaching and learning and raise the achievement of students have taken too long to progress.
- The use of ICT to set and monitor students' targets across the school is well embedded, although at times this information is not used by teachers to plan lessons which challenge all abilities.
- Access to ICT equipment in the school is good. The school provides opportunities for student support at lunchtime and after school. Technical support ensures that systems are generally reliable and available when needed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the quality of students' learning and their progress in ICT by:
 - sharing best practice in teaching in order to provide all students with activities and tasks which are suitably matched to their abilities and interests
 - further developing the ICT curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 to better challenge and enthuse students
 - ensuring that the use of ICT in other subjects is monitored and linked to the work of the ICT department.

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