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Mrs S Bond  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Bond

**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 19 and 20 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 eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT is good.

**Achievement in ICT**

Achievement in ICT is good.

- The school carefully assesses students during their first term and results show that they have average ICT capability. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has risen steadily over the last three years and students make good progress, although they do not have opportunities to demonstrate good capability in programming and data logging.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 have risen over time and are above average for those studying an examination course. However, this represents only about half the number of students in Year 11. Those not opting to study ICT as an examination course attain according to the subjects they are studying and thus achievement is variable. Students have strengths in using and understanding presentation software, media applications, and in computer-aided design and manufacture. They have

less well-developed skills in some common office applications including spreadsheets. Students' responses to teaching are good. They have well-developed listening and speaking skills but are often reluctant to speak in front of their peers. When given the opportunity, they work well together in groups or in pairs.

- Students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well through good planning, support and extra resources allocated to them. Those with special gifts and talents and the more able do not achieve as well as they might because of the narrow range of choices of study in ICT.

### **Quality of teaching in ICT**

The quality of teaching in ICT is good.

- The quality of ICT teaching is good although teachers have a tendency, in their desire to perform well when observed, to over-direct lessons at the expense of students' learning. In these lessons, the students are not provided with enough time to work at their own pace, independently or in groups. ICT lessons often begin with imaginative starter activities. Teachers display their work on all monitors at the same time; this helps students to understand what it is they are expected to learn. Learning objectives and assessment criteria are always on display but the interactive whiteboards are rarely used interactively and thus opportunities to model good ICT are sometimes missed. A particular strength of the teaching is that the issues highlighted for improvement in the school's self-evaluation, for example peer assessment, are always addressed in the detailed lesson planning.
- Some effective teaching focuses clearly on improving students' literacy skills. Teachers' subject knowledge is good; they answer students' questions well, dealing with errors expertly when they arise, but they do not address students' common errors and misconceptions in their planning.
- Some imaginative and effective use of ICT takes place in other subjects. For example, the dynamic use of the interactive whiteboard and a visualiser in a history lesson provided challenge at a high level. In PE a 'smartphone' application meant the teacher could give immediate feedback to students about their performance.

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

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is satisfactory.

- The Key Stage 3 curriculum addresses e-safety from the outset and this, together with assemblies and personal, social and health education lessons, leads to students have an excellent understanding of the issues about staying safe using ICT. The ICT curriculum in Years 7 and 8 addresses the programme of study but too little emphasis is placed on some areas such as programming. An appropriate range of educational software designed to teach the ICT curriculum is provided. Some

opportunities are made for students to apply or extend their knowledge, skills and understanding in other subjects but this is not coordinated so is not done progressively. Some subjects do not contribute as well as might be expected to the ICT capability of students.

- All students now follow a vocational course that begins in Year 9. Previously ICT was an option in Years 10 and 11 and this has led to gaps in attainment for those who do not take up the subject. In addition, the work that students do in other lessons does not form part of the assessment of their ICT capability in Key Stages 3 or 4. The school is aware of this and is planning to audit students' ICT capability across the school and provide additional input where gaps are identified.
- Teachers and students access the school network and those in Year 11 are beginning to use the new virtual learning environment (VLE) to access ICT resources both inside and outside the school. Some applications, such as GCSE revision podcasts, are proving very popular with students.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT is good.

- Students' achievement has improved over three years, as has teaching and learning. Access to ICT where and when it is needed is good, although students and teachers would welcome more opportunities to use portable technology rather than having to formally reserve time in one of the computer suites. Where portable ICT is available, for example in science, it is used effectively.
- Self-evaluation is good. It is based on a range of evidence including analysis of examination results, observations of teaching and learning, and responses from student questionnaires. A regular internal inspection of the ICT department is also undertaken which feeds into the self-evaluation process. Senior managers are accurate in their assessment of lessons which demonstrates an improvement from the time of the last inspection.
- The development plans for ICT as a subject and as a vision for whole-school ICT improvement build very well on self-evaluation, although they are not always costed and opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) are not identified. However, the CPD that has taken place over recent years has been effective and teachers are particularly grateful for the support given by specialist ICT teachers as well as their colleagues. Much sharing of good practice occurs across the school that works well in improving teaching. Crucially, actions for improvement identified in the development plans were seen being successfully addressed during this visit. Consequently, the school shows good capacity to improve further.

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

- improving the Key Stage 3 curriculum by including more opportunities for students to access programming in order that they can make more informed choices about Key Stage 4
- 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.

Yours sincerely

**John Williams**  
**Additional Inspector**