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Mr C Orr
Principal
Rawlins Community College
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Dear Mr Orr

Ofsted 2012–13 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 23 and 24 April 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 including two observed jointly with you.

The overall effectiveness of ICT is good.

Achievement in ICT

Achievement in ICT is good.

- Students begin in Year 10 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. A significant number of students choose to study applied ICT or computing in the sixth form and these students make at least good progress.
- Close monitoring of students' progress and very effective programmes of support ensure that no groups of students underachieve. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well in ICT lessons and make similar progress to their peers. The high quality of teaching and support from learning support assistants and good access to ICT facilities means that they make at least good progress. ICT is used innovatively to support students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- Students' behaviour in ICT lessons is good and this makes a significant contribution to their progress. The relationships between staff and students when using ICT are excellent.

Quality of teaching in ICT

The quality of teaching in ICT is good.

- All teachers of ICT have excellent subject knowledge and in the best lessons use this and a wide range of resources to plan activities which engage and motivate students. For example, in a Year 10 ICT lesson students used video materials produced by the teacher to make their websites more interactive. The students were keen to begin the task and their progress was supported by their enthusiasm and good behaviour and by the effective support of the teacher. In less effective lessons, teaching focuses too much on the development of basic skills and learning can become too teacher-focused.
- The assessment of work in ICT lessons is excellent. Students are aware of their end-of-year targets and their teachers ensure that they know how to achieve them. At times, however, this information is not used by teachers to plan lessons which challenge all abilities.
- The use of ICT to support learning across the school is more variable. Students have good access to ICT in other subjects but its use is not coordinated with the ICT curriculum and in some areas of the curriculum the use of ICT is limited to research and presentation and student progress in ICT is not monitored.

Quality of the curriculum in ICT

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is good.

- The vocational curriculum provided at Key Stage 4 for all students to study ICT is appropriate and the school is flexible in choosing contexts and pathways which will be relevant and of interest. In the sixth form, students can choose between vocational ICT and computing courses.
- The school has well-developed plans to improve the Key Stage 4 curriculum to further increase choice and better meet the needs of more able students.
- There are fewer opportunities in other curriculum areas for students to develop their skills in ICT. This work is not currently monitored or assessed, and this can lower the expectations of teachers and so limit the progress made.
- Students are supported to learn how to become responsible users of new technologies through ICT lessons and assemblies; discussions with students confirm that they have a very clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The school regularly informs and updates staff and parents of e-safety issues. The impact of the school's work on e-safety is outstanding.

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. Monitoring of the work of the department is regular and accurate and highly effective self-evaluation is leading to improvements in the ICT curriculum and to raising student achievement.
- Access to ICT equipment in the school is excellent. The use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) is enhancing students' achievement across the curriculum and has contributed to their good progress.
- Well-planned and engaging training has been provided for all staff and this, together with effective support from staff in the ICT department, has enhanced their ICT knowledge and understanding.

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 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