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Mr I Simpson
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mr Simpson

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 14 and 15 May 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 10 lessons including two observed jointly with you.

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 Key Stage 4 all students now follow a vocational ICT course and 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 good progress.

- 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. Students are keen to learn, they listen to each other and when given the opportunity, work well either in groups or independently.

Quality of teaching in ICT

The quality of teaching in ICT is satisfactory.

- Teachers of ICT and those who use ICT in their teaching have good subject knowledge and are confident users of ICT. In better lessons, teachers plan work which engages, challenges and motivates students but in some lessons all the students were asked to do the same tasks. This lack of differentiation and pace limits the progress of students. Although some ICT teaching supports students in developing their independent learning skills, opportunities are missed for group or paired work and, in these lessons, learning can become too teacher-focused.
- The assessment of work in ICT lessons is good. 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 and it is used appropriately in many lessons to develop their learning, but its use is not coordinated with the ICT curriculum and student progress in ICT is not monitored.

Quality of the curriculum in ICT

The quality of the curriculum in ICT is good.

- All students at Key Stage 3 receive their entitlement to the statutory ICT National Curriculum during ICT lessons. This curriculum has been recently updated to increase the interest to students.
- 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. The school has plans to improve the Key Stage 4 curriculum to further increase choice and better meet the needs of more able students.
- Students have access to some high-quality opportunities to use ICT in other subjects. In one Year 10 German lesson excellent resources were used to support students in preparing for their controlled assessment. However, this work is not effectively monitored or assessed, and this means that some students are receiving better experiences in ICT than others.
- Students are supported to learn how to become responsible users of new technologies through ICT and personal, social and health lessons (PSHE) and through assemblies. Discussions with students confirm that they have

a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The school informs and updates staff and parents of e-safety issues.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ICT is satisfactory.

- The leadership of the school is currently experiencing significant turbulence at both senior management and departmental levels. The school has sought and received excellent support from a partner secondary school and the strategic leadership of ICT across the school is now much improved. Senior managers demonstrate a clear desire to improve standards and the quality of teaching and learning. The work of the ICT department is now monitored regularly and this is leading to rapid improvement.
- Recent investments in ICT infrastructure, supported by staff, have improved access to facilities for staff and students. This is enhancing students' achievement across the curriculum and has contributed to their improved progress.
- A clear and understood vision exists for ICT both as a subject and across the school. Senior leaders are well informed of current developments in the subject and effective self-evaluation has informed a well-considered ICT development plan. Overall the school shows good capacity to improve ICT further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the quality of students' learning and their progress in ICT by:
 - sharing best practice to increase further the proportion of good teaching, in particular in using assessment information to provide all students with activities and tasks which are suitably matched to their abilities and interests
 - developing the ICT curriculum 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
 - ensuring that the school's plans for ICT are implemented, in particular to improve access to ICT resources further, so that ICT 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