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09 October 2006

Mr Byatt  
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Dear Mr Byatt

Ofsted survey inspection programme – ICT

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 5-6 October to look at work in ICT.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of ICT, the visit had a particular focus on the assessment of ICT and the readiness of the school for the onscreen Key Stage 3 ICT test.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, analysis of data, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, observation of four lessons and visits to one other.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in ICT are satisfactory.

- Standards in ICT are average at the end of Key Stage 3. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement.

- Results in the GCSE examination in 2006 were very low. The pupils who studied the subject in Year 11 underachieved as a result of severe problems with staffing, which also affected Year 10 pupils.
- Pupils currently in Year 11 are now making good progress. Current standards are average which represents satisfactory achievement for these pupils.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about ICT, although many lack self-confidence and need to be prompted by teachers rather than trying to find solutions for themselves.
- Pupils work hard and concentrate very well in ICT lessons. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are particularly polite and well-mannered.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in ICT is good.

- Lessons are consistently well planned to meet the needs of different pupils. Work is suitably demanding, although pupils are not given enough encouragement to speak aloud in lessons.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and of the requirements of the examination syllabus. Standards of discipline are very high.
- In other subjects, there is extensive use of ICT to improve teaching methods and enrich the experience of pupils. Pupils use ICT to improve their work in many lessons and at lunchtimes. However, they are unable to access their work from home.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- All pupils study ICT in Key Stage 3. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 meets requirements, but provides few opportunities for pupils to be innovative or develop their creativity. In art, on the other hand, pupils in Year 10 have produced some exceptional work when supported by professional designers.
- At Key Stage 4, ICT is an option which is chosen by the great majority of pupils. Those not studying the subject are having a course planned for them to meet National Curriculum requirements.
- Too little time is allocated to the double award GCSE course, which places great demands on pupils, and prevents the less able pupils from completing the course.
- In other subjects, many teachers use ICT effectively in their lessons to enable pupils to apply their ICT capability. Pupils at Key Stage 4 say that they use ICT everyday in at least one subject other than ICT.

## Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management of ICT are good.

- ICT has been given a high profile by senior managers who see it as a means of raising standards across the school. The school has made good use of its recent specialist status. Resources have been well chosen and deployed. Interactive whiteboards are well used, both by pupils and teachers, who have benefited from effective training.
- The school is innovative in its use of ICT. Groups of pupils in modern languages and business education have 'e-mentors' in local businesses, who they can contact for research purposes. Higher attaining pupils have been issued with PDAs as part of a pilot scheme to evaluate their use in schools.
- The subject is well managed on a day-to-day basis. The school has an accurate picture of standards and the progress of pupils in the longer term, although the tracking of pupils' progress over shorter periods is just developing.

## Assessment of ICT and the readiness of the school for the onscreen Key Stage 3 ICT test

Assessment is satisfactory.

- Standards are assessed accurately and progress over time is monitored. The school is currently developing a system that will show how well an individual is doing against their targets.
- The school is not well prepared for the onscreen Key Stage 3 ICT test. The school entered all Year 9 pupils for the test in 2006. As they were the only school to do so, they received considerable support from the local authority. The guidance was late arriving and the school found that the specification of some hardware was not good enough. After several technical problems the school eventually sent 118 tests for marking, but only six arrived and of these only two pupils were given a mark. Only eight pupils were able to register for test 2.

## Inclusion

The school works exceptionally hard to ensure that ICT is used to help all pupils to maximise their potential. Pupils who do not have access to ICT facilities at home are provided with laptops. Particularly good use of ICT is made in helping those who are learning English for the first time, although this would be improved further by providing more computers for them to use. Pupils who find controlling their behaviour difficult have access to ICT, which allows them to keep up with their work when removed from lessons. Special arrangements have been made for those with physical disabilities to ensure they are not disadvantaged. Lower attaining pupils and those with

learning difficulties are helped to improve the quality of their presentation, which raises their self-confidence and levels of self-esteem.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to ensure the curriculum at Key Stage 3 provides more opportunities for pupils to be creative, and that courses at Key Stage 4 are more suited to the different needs of pupils
- to increase the number of computers available for use in the learning centre for pupils who are at an early stage of learning English
- to improve the opportunities for pupils to access their work from home.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop ICT in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

David Driscoll  
Additional Inspector