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Mr M Sandeman  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Sandeman

Ofsted survey inspection programme – ICT

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 18-19 September 2006 to look at work in information and communication technology (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 governors, staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Standards in ICT at the end of Key Stage 3 and in the full GCSE and GNVQ courses followed in Key Stage 4 are above average. Attainment is weaker in the ICT short course. Results in AS and A2 ICT courses are high and significantly exceed the national average.
- Students are confident and skilful in their use of ICT across all strands of the National Curriculum programme of study and resourceful in overcoming problems. Their ability to critically review and evaluate their own work is not always as well developed as the technical skills and knowledge they show when using software programs.
- Students' behaviour in ICT lessons and in lessons involving the use of ICT is very good.
- ICT is used very effectively by a range of subject teachers to stimulate students' thinking and develop their ability to solve problems.

#### Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Pupils made good or outstanding progress in most of the lessons seen. This was as a result of explicit learning objectives, a good level of student participation, well managed transitions between activities and clear and accurate explanations.
- Students are motivated by their experience of ICT, both in dedicated ICT lessons and when applying their ICT capability within other subjects.
- Teachers use interactive whiteboards creatively in a range of subjects to develop students' thinking and to stimulate their active participation in lessons. Teachers' use of ICT adds significantly to students' enjoyment of lessons.
- Group work is not exploited sufficiently to enable students to share ideas and evaluate each other's work.

#### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The school meets the statutory requirements in relation to the National Curriculum programmes of study for ICT at both Key Stages 3 and 4.
- The range of ICT courses offered in Key Stage 4 is well designed to meet students' academic and vocational needs and there is good provision for students to continue their study of ICT at Advanced Level in the sixth form.

- There are good opportunities for students to develop their ICT capability within other subjects. At present, these experiences are not mapped against the ICT programme of study.

### Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management of ICT are good.

- Senior leaders and governors share a clear vision of the potential of ICT for school improvement. They have been very successful in implementing this vision and promoting improvements within the subject, the development of ICT capability across the curriculum and teachers' use of ICT in their own professional practice.
- The head of ICT has made a swift and beneficial impact in the relatively short time he has been at the school. Since his arrival there have been significant improvements in achievement and standards, curricular provision, the quality of teaching and learning and the resourcing of the subject.
- The vision for ICT is shared by staff. Teachers are committed to the development of ICT within their own work; they have good access to laptop computers and interactive whiteboards and have been well supported in developing the skills to use these effectively. Opportunities to share practice have added to teachers' confidence and skills when using ICT.
- Specialist status has enabled the school to make very rapid progress in raising students' achievement and aspirations.

### Assessment of ICT and the readiness of the school for the onscreen KS3 ICT test

- The appointment of specialist teachers and increased emphasis on the moderation of judgements is contributing to improvements in the consistency and accuracy of ICT assessments.
- In some respects, students do not feel that the Key Stage 3 ICT test has been a fair test of their capability. The school has identified a range of technical and curricular difficulties and has strategies to overcome these for 2007.

## Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good.

- There is very good provision for students with learning difficulties or disabilities to use ICT to support their learning.
- The daily homework club provides very good access to ICT for students who do not have this at home.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included the need to:

- ensure that the planning of ICT lessons takes full account of students' different levels of ICT capability
- increase the coherence of the school's planning of the ICT curriculum by incorporating discrete teaching and the application of ICT capability across subjects
- improve the rigour in the self-evaluation process and the improvement planning of ICT.

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

Rhona Seviour  
Her Majesty's Inspector