

18 January 2007

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Dear Mr Bailey

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Information and
Communication Technology (ICT) and Religious Education (RE)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during
our joint visit on 9-11 January to look at work in ICT and RE.

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.

As outlined in the initial letter, as well as looking at ICT, the visit had a
particular focus on the assessment of ICT. In Religious Education, the visit
had a particular focus on the implementation of the agreed syllabus.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with
staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students'
work and observation lessons.

Information and Communication Technology

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in ICT are satisfactory.

- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3 so that by the end of
Year 9, pupils' standards in ICT are above average. Pupils have a
good knowledge of different software applications and are able to
choose the most appropriate software for a specific task.

- By the end of Year 11, standards in ICT are average and pupils' progress is satisfactory. In 2006, a small minority of boys underachieved because they did not complete GCSE coursework requirements. The department is taking action to ensure this does not happen again.
- The development of pupils' ICT capability across the curriculum is varied. In design and technology, ICT is used very effectively to produce high quality graphical products and improve pupils' ICT capability. In some other subjects, the development of pupils' ICT capability is less formalised and pupils' progress is less secure.
- Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy their ICT lessons and develop good independent learning skills.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning in ICT is satisfactory.

- There are examples of outstanding teaching as seen in design and technology. On these occasions, pupils are enthused by the innovative use of ICT to improve their understanding of computer aided design software. This helps to improve their standards in both design and technology and ICT.
- Specialist ICT teachers have a good knowledge of the software applications available and use this effectively to engage and motivate pupils. Tasks are well matched to the needs of most pupils although occasionally tasks do not extend the most able. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to extend or reinforce pupils' knowledge of the technical vocabulary of the subject.
- Teachers from across the school are beginning to integrate ICT into their lessons. However, there is not a consistent approach to developing pupils' ICT capability in other subjects and this lessens the progress that pupils make.
- Very good use is made of the support provided by the ICT technical staff.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- All pupils follow an accredited course in ICT at Key Stage 4. Statutory requirements are met fully at Key Stage 3.
- Good use is made of ICT in subjects such as design and technology and geography. The modern foreign languages department is using ICT effectively to improve pupils' enthusiasm for languages as well as improving standards.
- Continuing improvements to the ICT infrastructure are ensuring that pupils have greater access to ICT facilities. However, whilst plans for the introduction of a virtual learning environment are well advanced, currently, pupils have only limited access to school based

materials. This limits the extent of their ability to carry out research.

- ICT is used effectively by the learning support department to track and improve pupils' progress.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of ICT are good.

- The relatively new Head of ICT has brought a greater consistency to the work of the department. New strategies are now in place to monitor pupils' ICT GCSE coursework performance.
- Considerable funding has been spent on improving the ICT infrastructure and employing ICT specialist teachers. There is a clear vision for the development of ICT and strong support from senior staff. The department is well placed to move forward.
- There is only limited monitoring of pupils' ICT experiences and performance across the school. You have recently appointed a co-ordinator to oversee and improve these developments.

Assessment of ICT

Assessment is good.

- There are good systems in place to monitor the progress of pupils in ICT. The Milestones performance system is effective and good intervention strategies are available to improve pupils' progress.
- Pupils know their targets for improvement and know how to improve their work. Good quality marking and informative comments enhance pupils' ICT capability.
- The school is well prepared for the Key Stage 3 ICT on screen test.

Inclusion

All pupils benefit from opportunities to use the school's computers outside of lesson times. This ensures that none are disadvantaged when completing homework or research. The learning support department uses ICT effectively to motivate and improve pupils' standards.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included to:

- improve, review and monitor pupils' ICT experiences across the curriculum
- continue with the introduction of the virtual learning environment
- continue to take action to improve boys' performance in ICT GCSE.

Religious Education

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

The achievement of pupils in RE is satisfactory and improving.

- During Key Stage 3 pupils make satisfactory progress and attain standards broadly in line with expectations in the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus for RE.
- In the GCSE short course, for which almost all pupils are entered, results in recent years were a little above the national average at A*-C. However, results fell well below expectations for the subject in 2006 and below those achieved in most other subjects.
- Their current work at both Key Stage 3 and in the GCSE short course shows that their rate of progress is beginning to improve and achievement has potential to improve further when aspects of assessment for learning are more firmly embedded in the RE curriculum.
- Pupils make good progress in their personal development, especially in Key Stage 4 where they explore a range of contemporary issues in the context of the study of religions. There are limited opportunities for pupils to meet and engage with people of different cultural and religious backgrounds. RE contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual and moral development through an appropriate curriculum and sensitive teaching.

Quality of teaching and learning of RE

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good.

- Teaching at Key Stage 4 often challenges pupils to think about different religious responses to contemporary issues.
- Teaching at Key Stage 3 is often good and pupils make effective progress.
- Where some of the teaching is less effective, lessons tend to lack visual impact and pace, and, consequently, an element of challenge.
- Occasionally, those who teach the subject lack the necessary knowledge and understanding to teach RE effectively.
- A start has been made within the subject to implement a more rigorous programme of assessment for learning in line with the school's policy, including the incorporation of level descriptors from the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus into a programme of regular assessment tasks.
- Teachers usually mark pupils' written work regularly and thoroughly, and support their progress with helpful comments, guidance and in some cases targets for further progress.

- Pupils in Key Stage 3 are starting to be clearer about the level at which they are working. Key Stage 4 pupils are generally well aware of their target grades and what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils of all abilities receive a good level of support and guidance from teachers.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- The RE curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant. Planning is generally good both in the long and medium terms and in lesson preparation.
- The use of levelling at Key Stage 3 is at an early stage, but is, on the whole, accurate.
- The GCSE short course provides an effective and potentially challenging programme of study for Key Stage 4.
- Lack of sufficient provision for RE in the Sixth Form means that the school does not meet statutory requirements in this respect.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of RE are satisfactory.

- Leadership and management of RE are part of the overall responsibility of the humanities and modern foreign languages faculty. The subject specialist offers helpful and detailed guidance and support to colleagues in terms of subject content, lesson preparation and resources.
- The arrangements for self-evaluation and monitoring of RE are satisfactory. However, the school needs to ensure that, in any situation where a non-specialist teacher is engaged in subject teaching, subject specific issues and content are monitored carefully.

The implementation of the revised agreed syllabus

Some progress has been made in bringing the existing school programme into line with the revised Norfolk Agreed Syllabus, but further work needs to be undertaken to ensure that the school's schemes of work reflect more fully the coherence of the programmes of study and level descriptions in the Agreed Syllabus.

Inclusion

Pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress in their learning and development and are supported effectively in lessons by teachers and assistants. There is a need to develop further guidance for teachers in relation to differentiation.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the quality of subject teaching is monitored effectively
- continuing to bring the curriculum into line with the provisions of the Norfolk agreed syllabus for RE
- continuing to develop an effective programme of assessment for learning and differentiation in line with the school's overall policy
- finding ways of incorporating further developments in the use of ICT in subject teaching.

We hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop ICT and Religious Education in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

David Cox
Additional Inspector