22 January 2007

Mr P Williamson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Williamson

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

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 18-19 January 2007 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 senior and middle managers, discussions with pupils and students from Years 9, 10, 11 and 13, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of Information and Communication Technology was judged to be inadequate.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in ICT are inadequate overall

- Standards in Key Stage 3 are above average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.
- Throughout the school, pupils have good basic skills which have been developed well through frequent use in other subjects.
- The ICT standards of the vast majority of pupils in Year 11 are below average; few pupils can devise effective systems for the application of ICT in real world situations.

- ICT standards in Year 12 are below average. Students make inadequate progress and do not do as well in ICT as in most of their other subjects.
- In Year 13, standards in ICT are average and given their below average starting point, pupils achieve well.
- Pupils enjoy using computers and have good attitudes to the subject.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning in ICT is satisfactory

- Teachers have good relationships with their pupils which encourage and motivate pupils to want to learn.
- Teachers have a good command of the subject; they explain concepts and demonstrate software clearly and accurately.
- Not enough attention is paid to the different levels of ability in the class when planning tasks in Key Stage 3.
- Assessment does not give enough guidance to pupils on how to improve their work.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is inadequate

- There is good access to computers outside of lesson times.
- Good curriculum links exist with local universities.
- There is extra provision for pupils with special educational needs, gifted and talented pupils and girls.
- Good use is made of ICT in most subjects particularly in design technology, modern foreign languages, English, mathematics and science.
- The vast majority of pupils in Key Stage 4 do not have ICT lessons and are not covering the National Curriculum in ICT.

Leadership and management of ICT

The leadership and management of ICT are inadequate.

- Monitoring systems are satisfactory.
- Technical support is of high quality.
- Accommodation is inadequate and is inhibiting teaching styles, for example, the use of group work.
- Teaching is often interrupted when computers suddenly switch off due to the inadequacy of the electricity supply.
- Leadership and management have failed to ensure that all pupils cover the National Curriculum in ICT and make at least satisfactory progress.

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

Assessment is inadequate.

- Assessment data at the end of Key Stage 3 is unreliable in giving an accurate picture of pupils' attainment.
- Where assessment data exists, it is not used in teachers' planning.
- In examination classes, pupils are given good guidance on how to gain maximum marks for coursework assignments.
- Targets are set, but these are not based on pupils' prior attainment in ICT.
- The progress pupils make in ICT is not adequately tracked as they move through the school.
- The vast majority of pupils in Key Stage 4 are not assessed in ICT at all.
- The school is well prepared for the ICT on-screen test.

Inclusion

There is good access to computers outside of lesson times for all groups of pupils. The homework club provides very good support for pupils without a home computer or who have learning and/or physical difficulties. Higher attaining pupils and girls have extra provision. Lesson plans do not differentiate for different ability groups in the class.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included to:

- ensure all pupils receive their entitlement to the full National Curriculum in ICT
- develop and implement more robust and accurate assessment procedures
- improve accommodation to enable teachers to employ a greater variety of teaching strategies and enable pupils to make faster progress in lessons.

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

Joe Clark
Additional Inspector