

08 February 2007

Mrs M Jackson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Jackson

Ofsted survey inspection programme – ICT

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 6-7 February 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.

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, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in ICT are good.

- By the end of Year 9, standards in ICT are above average and pupils' progress is good. Pupils have a good knowledge of presentation techniques which they use effectively to improve their work. Most know how to create a database and gather information.
- By the end of Year 11, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the social impact of ICT on society. They design and produce systems for small businesses well.
- Lower attaining pupils do not always make the same progress as other pupils because work is not always well matched to their needs.

- The development of pupils' ICT capability across the curriculum varies considerably, even within departments. In design and technology, ICT is used very effectively to produce high quality electronic circuit boards. In religious studies, pupils are able to improve their standards because of the many extension activities they have access to via the school's virtual learning environment. In many other subjects, the development of pupils' ICT capability is inconsistent and too dependent on the skills of individual teachers.
- Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy their ICT lessons and develop good independent learning skills. From Year 7 onwards, most pupils are able to make appropriate choices when choosing software applications for a specific audience.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning in ICT is good.

- There are examples of outstanding teaching as seen in design and technology. Pupils are enthused by the innovative use of ICT to extend their study of the subject. This enables them to improve their attainment and further develop their ICT capability.
- The specialist ICT teaching observed was good. Teachers provide pupils with exciting activities and encourage pupils to develop independent learning skills.
- Occasionally, pupils do not listen to instructions and they struggle to complete a task. This normally occurs when the teacher has been talking for too long. As a consequence, some lower attaining pupils do not make sufficient progress in these lessons.
- Good use is made of the support provided by the ICT technical staff.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory

- All pupils follow a programme of study in ICT that meets statutory requirements. However, a small minority of pupils at Key Stage 4 do not value the short course ICT GCSE and this was one factor in some pupils underperforming last year. The school is reviewing the current ICT provision at Key Stage 4.
- Good use is made of ICT in subjects such as geography, art and design and modern languages to improve standards in these subjects.
- Continuing improvements to the ICT infrastructure are ensuring that pupils have greater access to ICT facilities.
- Information and communication technology is used effectively by the learning support department to track and improve pupils' progress.
- The virtual learning environment greatly enhances pupils' ICT experiences.

- There is only limited monitoring of pupils' ICT experiences and performance across the school. The school's leaders have also identified this as an area for improvement.

Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management of ICT are good.

- There is a clear vision for the development of ICT and strong support from senior staff.
- The subject leader of ICT, along with the Director of ICT, provide good leadership and have helped the school to make considerable progress with ICT developments in recent years.
- Considerable funding has been spent on improving the ICT infrastructure and there is good technical support. The department is well placed to improve further.

Assessment of ICT

Assessment is good.

- There are extensive assessment procedures which ensure that pupils' progress is effectively monitored.
- Pupils know their targets for improvement. Good quality marking, informative comments and effective intervention strategies are used well to enable pupils to improve their 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' achievement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included to:

- review, improve and monitor pupils' ICT experiences across the curriculum
- review and improve the ICT Key Stage 4 curriculum
- ensure lower attaining pupils make better progress in ICT 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

David Cox
Additional Inspector