Ofsted
raising standards
improving lives

29 October 2007

Mr P Poulton
Headteacher
Ludlow Church of England School
Bromfield Road
Burway
Ludlow
SY7 1GJ

Dear Mr Poulton

Ofsted survey inspection programme of secondary schools: Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 18-19 October 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 impact on student achievement in 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be inadequate.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in ICT are inadequate overall.

- Students join the school in Year 7 with broadly average skills in ICT. By the end of Year 9 their standard of attainment is average. This represents satisfactory achievement. The most able students do not make adequate progress and few reach the higher levels. This is because teachers do not provide tasks which are challenging enough for these students.
- Students at Key Stage 4 who choose to study GCSE ICT make good progress and attain standards above the national average. They have a good knowledge of communication software and use this effectively to

improve the standard of their work in both ICT and other subjects. Not enough is expected of more able students and few attained the highest grades in their GCSE exams in 2007.

- Many students in Year 11 have had insufficient access to ICT experiences and as a result, their progress is inadequate and many fail to use what ICT skills they possess to improve standards within other subjects.
- Students' personal development is satisfactory. Whilst most students behave well and work hard, some become restless in lessons and do not make adequate progress. This is because they find the tasks either too simple or not interesting enough. Many of the tasks are highly structured and do not enable students to develop independent learning skills.

Quality of teaching and learning of subject

The quality of teaching and learning in ICT is satisfactory

- The quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 4 is good. Specialist teachers have a good understanding of their subject and how to teach it effectively. Students are managed effectively. Good use is made of interactive white boards. Students are often asked to illustrate to their peers how they have tackled an ICT problem. Relationships are good and this helps to build students' self-esteem.
- The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is too variable due to the number and varied experience of teachers involved. Specialist teachers plan lessons well. Questioning is often challenging and students are expected to provide extensive answers. Non-specialist teachers, whilst having sound ICT skills themselves, do not always understand the pedagogy of ICT and how students learn best when using ICT. As a consequence, not enough attention is paid to the management of the class, time is wasted repeating instructions and the pace of learning is slow. These factors impede the progress of students, particularly that of some of the most able.
- Whilst students' work is assessed regularly, students do not always receive sufficient, informative comments about how to improve their work.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is inadequate.

- The school has successfully introduced the ICT GCSE in recent years. However, the range of ICT courses at Key Stage 4 is very limited and does not meet the needs of all learners. The majority of students in Year 11 do not have ICT lessons and are not receiving their entitlement to the National Curriculum in ICT.
- There is satisfactory access to computers outside of lesson times. Students can gain limited access to the school's ICT facilities from home. However, the school has no virtual learning platform and this restricts students' research and homework.

- The use of ICT within other subjects is inconsistent and is not monitored. Good use is made of ICT in design and technology to improve standards of production work.

Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management are inadequate.

- There is no shared, coherent strategy for the development of ICT across the school. Whilst new courses are being introduced to overcome the deficiencies in the ICT curriculum, the school has been slow to meet fully the statutory requirements for ICT. The development of ICT across the school is not monitored or evaluated thoroughly enough which results in widely varying ICT experiences for students.
- The head of ICT has been in post for a short time and is relatively inexperienced. She has successfully introduced GCSE ICT and is working hard to develop ICT at Key Stage 3. However, there is very little monitoring of the work of the ICT staff which results in inconsistencies in the way ICT is taught.
- Resources are looked after well and there has been recent investment in the ICT infrastructure which is effectively supporting the GCSE ICT. However, access to ICT facilities is problematic and is restricting the development of ICT within subjects.

Subject issue - the impact of assessment on student achievement in ICT

Assessment in ICT is inadequate.

- The school does not carry out an audit of students' ICT skills on entry to Year 7 and struggles to evaluate the progress of students at Key Stage 3. Students are tested at the end of each unit of work. However, students do not always know at what level they are working or how to improve their work.
- Where assessment data exists, it is not always used in teachers' planning.
- In examination classes, students are given good guidance on how to gain maximum marks for coursework assignments.
- The majority of students at Key Stage 4 are not assessed in ICT at all.

Inclusion

The subject's contribution to the inclusion of students is inadequate.

- Lesson plans do not always differentiate for different ability groups in the class. There is little extra provision for students who are gifted in ICT.
- The curriculum does not meet the needs of all students.
- Additional ICT clubs give good support for students without a computer at home.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included to:

- ensure all students receive their entitlement to the full National Curriculum in ICT
- develop and implement more robust assessment procedures
- improve the whole-school leadership and management of ICT
- ensure there is a more consistent approach to the development of ICT across the school.

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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

David Cox
Additional Inspector