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Mr D Selkirk  
Principal  
Heath Park Business and Enterprise College  
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Dear Mr Selkirk

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 15-16 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 students' 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be outstanding.

Students cover the programme of study for ICT in Years 7 and 8. They are assessed at the end of Year 8 and then start an accredited ICT course in Year 9.

#### Achievement and standards

Overall achievement and standards are outstanding.

- Students join the school in Year 7 with broadly average skills in ICT. By the end of Year 8 their standard of attainment is above the national average for students who are normally assessed at the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement.
- The standards reached by students at the end of Key Stage 4 are exceptionally high and this represents excellent progress given that all

students follow an accredited ICT course. The standard of ICT work observed during the visit was also exceptionally high.

- Students have an excellent knowledge and understanding of modelling techniques and produce high quality products of commercial quality. They develop very good research skills and are very proficient at using the internet to improve their ICT skills and also their standards in other subjects.
- The development of students' ICT capability across the curriculum is excellent. The quality of students' work in science and English for example is greatly enhanced through the effective use of specialist software.
- Students' ability to evaluate their work and that of others is very well developed and this enables them to develop excellent independent learning skills.
- Post-16 students achieve well and attain standards above the national average.
- Students' personal development is outstanding. Students are confident and are very eager to do their best. They work exceedingly well together in teams.

#### Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning of ICT is outstanding.

- Specialist ICT teachers have extensive knowledge and understanding of their subject, particularly the requirements of the vocational examination courses. The pace of learning is rapid because teachers provide interesting tasks that challenge the vast majority of students. Occasionally, a small minority of the most able students find the work too easy because some of the tasks are not demanding enough.
- There are excellent opportunities for all staff to extend their expertise in the use of specialist software and hardware such as multimedia production techniques and the use of personal digital assistants (PDAs) to improve learning.
- All lessons observed were at least good and many had outstanding features. In one outstanding lesson, Year 7 students were given an excellent tour of a BBC website by a fellow student. This enabled students to have a clear insight about the website and how it could be used to improve their reading skills.
- In all the lessons observed students were very inquisitive and highly motivated learners. There is a good deal of fun in lessons and both staff and students enjoy working with and learning from one another. Staff and students try out new techniques secure in the knowledge that if something does not work there will be no criticism.

#### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The school is making outstanding provision for all students to study ICT as a discrete subject. The ICT competency programme in Year 7 provides students with an excellent grounding in a wide range of ICT

applications. This enables students of all abilities to successfully complete the Key Stage 3 curriculum by the end of Year 8.

- The school has outstanding ICT resources and uses PDAs innovatively with all students in Key Stage 3. In a Year 8 science lesson, students made effective use of these resources to video a science investigation and upload their findings to the school computer. This provided opportunities for further study.
- Good use is made of customised national strategy materials at Key Stage 3. Students enjoy accessing the school's ICT facilities from home although the learning platform does not yet fully meet the requirements of the school. This inhibits some of the innovative projects the school is keen to develop.

## Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- At all levels the leadership and management of ICT are outstanding. You are passionate about providing students with high level ICT skills that will benefit them in the future. To this end you are exceedingly well supported by the associate headteacher and the ICT leader of learning.
- There is a clear, coherent vision for the development of ICT which all staff share. This drive for excellence ensures that standards continue to improve in ICT. Innovative ICT projects are managed very well by the director of new technologies which ensures the school remains at the forefront of ICT development.
- ICT is embedded very well within the curriculum and is monitored and evaluated effectively. There are innovative ideas to involve students more in their own learning. For example, students complete an electronic i-plan which provides them with guidance and options for their future studies.
- The self evaluation process is very effective and demonstrates an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the ICT department. Areas for improvement are well communicated and strategies clearly articulated.

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

Assessment in ICT is outstanding.

- The school has an excellent knowledge of students' ICT capability. From the start of Year 7, students are assessed and their progress is tracked. An initial audit of students' ICT skills enables staff to provide more personalised ICT schemes for students. Students are assessed at the end of each unit of work and their grades/levels are recorded electronically. The school has developed its own electronic tracking system which is proving to be a valuable tool in the mentoring of students. At any time throughout the year, a student's progress can be evaluated and effective action taken in order to maintain progress.

- ICT projects are assessed rigorously and students are provided with informative comments on how to improve their work. Extensive self and peer assessment enables students to become more confident about their abilities. Students are very comfortable about accepting and giving constructive criticism.

## Inclusion

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

- This is an inclusive school which works very hard to ensure that students are provided with exciting ICT opportunities that will prepare them well for their future education or employment. Students are helped to plan and improve their work by using ICT. For example, the school is investing heavily in electronic books to help improve students' reading skills.
- All students benefit from opportunities to use the school's computers outside of lesson times. This ensures none are disadvantaged when completing homework or research. The well designed courses at Key Stage 4 enable students of all abilities to gain valuable ICT skills.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring the small minority of more able students are provided with more demanding tasks that enable them to reach the very highest levels
- developing the virtual learning platform further still to ensure it meets the requirements of 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