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Mr G Lloyd  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Lloyd

Ofsted survey inspection programme of secondary schools 2007/8  
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17-18 December 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 quality of 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, observation of four lessons, visits to other lessons where ICT was used, visits to after school activities and observation of an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in ICT are good overall.

- Pupils make good progress to reach standards that are above average.
- Until 18 months ago, progress for many pupils was slow. However, changes to staffing and curriculum have led to great improvements, so pupils are making up for the time lost and are now forging ahead in their studies. They are confident in the use of a wide range of

software, and also have a good understanding of the theory associated with the subject.

- Pupils make good use of their ICT skills in many other subjects. They learn new skills and often apply these in creative ways, particularly in media studies and art.
- Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils thoroughly enjoy using ICT, when it is appropriate, because it allows them to work at a pace most suitable for them. They concentrate hard on their work and are well behaved. All of the many pupils I met were invariably polite.

### Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning in ICT is good.

- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. The tasks given to pupils are interesting, and challenge them at a level appropriate for their ability. Teachers set limits on the time available for each task, which ensures a brisk pace. Sometimes, however, the pace is too quick for some pupils, especially when the time allocated has not taken account of the speed of the network connection.
- Lessons always start with very clear guidance on what pupils are expected to achieve and how they are to do it. These instructions are supported by excellent resources that give helpful hints on what to do if a pupil gets stuck. This allows teachers to spend their time supporting those who need it most.
- ICT is used extensively in many subjects, to make lessons more interesting. Boys' standards have been improved significantly in subjects such as English and physical education, because teachers have used ICT to motivate them and provide more practical approaches to learning.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The school has made many changes to the curriculum to successfully raise standards. All pupils in year 9 now work towards an examination, which makes the subject more relevant to them. There is a good range of courses available in Years 10 and 11. The tasks given to pupils in all years are interesting and provide good coverage of the National Curriculum at a level that is appropriate for the different ability groups.
- The use of ICT in other subjects is widespread and often innovative. The use of hand held machines to practise mathematics and problem solving has revolutionised tutor time: pupils were keen to get to registration as early as possible, and work solidly for the full time. Eportfolios are not just used in ICT, but in other subjects too. In art, for example, they are used to provide an overview for parents of coursework completed, and highlight where improvements need to be made, so parents can play a greater part in their child's education.

- Pupils are not yet able to access their work, or the school's resources, directly from home. However, the school has plans to implement a Virtual Learning Environment in the near future.

## Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- The ICT department is led and managed exceptionally well. In a little over 18 months the department has moved from one of the worst performing to one of the best. This rate of improvement is continuing, with rapidly rising standards and much better achievement. The biggest change is in pupils' attitudes. They are now keen, interested and motivated, whereas previously they were bored.
- The head of department is an excellent role model in the support he provides for new and inexperienced staff. Support documentation, such as schemes of work, and resources are all of the highest quality. Data is used exceptionally well to check on the department's progress and to identify those areas that still need to be improved.
- You and your and senior managers see ICT as a force to drive up standards across the school. All staff have embraced this vision as they are encouraged to try new approaches, which are proving successful at many levels.

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

Assessment in ICT is good.

- The assessment of pupils' work is accurate and allows teachers to identify any who may be at risk of underachieving. However, teachers do not have a clear understanding of standards on entry to Year 7 in ICT, as they rely too heavily on the English SAT results.
- Some outstanding use of assessment was observed in lessons, where the teacher started with a spreadsheet showing the progress made by each pupil, and their targets for the lesson, but this approach is not used consistently across the school.

## Inclusion

- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are catered for well. Teaching assistants are well informed and carefully targeted to pupils where they can provide the best support.
- The achievement of white boys is improving through the innovative use of ICT. In physical education, for example, league tables and voting are successfully used to motivate boys to work harder and improve their attitudes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- gaining a clearer picture of pupils' standards in ICT when they join the school
- providing pupils with greater access to their work and the school's resources from home.

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 Driscoll  
Additional Inspector