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Dear Miss Roan

Ofsted survey inspection programme – ICT

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 30-31 January 2008 to look at work in ICT.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the quality of assessment.

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 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Overall standards and achievement are outstanding.

- Students join the school in Year 7 with below average skills in ICT. By the end of Year 11 their standard of attainment in ICT is above the national average. This represents outstanding achievement. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of designing and implementing ICT systems to meet a specific need. They are proficient at using software to produce high quality business documentation. They make effective use of the internet to carry out research and enhance their work in other subjects.

- Students are confident users of ICT and work well together in pairs and in teams. Students have very good critical awareness of the ICT materials they read and how to validate information before they accept its accuracy.
- Occasionally, a small minority of the most able students are not challenged sufficiently because activities are not matched closely enough to their needs.
- Sixth form students achieve well and enjoy the practical nature of the computer courses.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- It is the consistency with which students receive good teaching that enables them to make outstanding progress. Teachers use their extensive previous experience of the ICT industry to bring real world applications to the classroom, which motivates students.
- Teachers have a very good knowledge of the vocational examinations and use this effectively to ensure students gain maximum marks in coursework.
- Teachers are very good at fostering group work, which encourages students to share and develop resources.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- All students have extensive access to ICT. The excellent virtual learning platform is helping to raise attainment through improved communication and understanding between staff, students and parents.
- ICT is taught both as a discrete subject and integrated into all other curriculum areas. Subjects are developing schemes of work to incorporate recognised good ICT practice, and to provide a meaningful and progressive ICT experience for students.

Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- Senior leaders provide a strong steer to the ICT learning manager and the e-learning co-ordinator. ICT is regarded as an important tool in the drive to improve standards of attainment throughout the school.
- Specialist status has been used very effectively to improve the ICT infrastructure and other aspects of the school network and management. The network manager and the support team ensure students have access to modern ICT facilities and the replacement of hardware is continuously being reviewed.

- High quality ICT training takes place on a whole school basis when new aspects are introduced, for example, all staff received training on how to use the virtual learning environment.
- The school actively promotes the participation of parents/carers in ICT and encourages the use of the computer facilities by those in the community who request access to them.

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

Assessment in ICT is outstanding.

- Assessment of ICT takes place both in ICT lessons and where appropriate when ICT is used in other subjects. Students' ICT capability is assessed on entry to Year 7. Clear learning objectives support the focus of assessed activities. Each module and strand of ICT is formally assessed, levelled and recorded for each student. Students are fully aware of the level they are working and know how to improve their ICT work.

Inclusion

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

- The school recognises the advantages of the use of ICT by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students are supported through the use of specific programs as requested. Before and after school, computer clubs enable students who do not have computers at home to use the facilities for homework. The school is in the process of purchasing computers for students to loan.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring the small minority of more able students are sufficiently challenged in order to raise their standards of attainment in ICT.

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