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Mr M Burrowes
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Dear Mr Burrowes

Ofsted survey inspection programme – citizenship and Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

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

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the citizenship, the visit had a particular focus on provision for teaching and learning about Britain's diversity. In ICT, there was a particular focus on 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 teachers and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of lessons.

Citizenship

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Students have adequate knowledge and understanding of the citizenship curriculum. Areas of relative strength include human rights and aspects of the law; political knowledge and understanding is less well developed.

- Students in Year 7 and those doing the GCSE have opportunities for enquiry and communication in citizenship contexts, but participation and responsible action are less well developed.
- The current curriculum militates against progression in understanding and skills of citizenship.

Quality of teaching and learning of citizenship

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Lessons observed were predominantly good and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Good features of lessons included the well planned use of ICT by teachers, interesting and varied tasks and very good relationships with students.
- However, as recognised by the school in its own evaluation, inconsistent teaching quality was a factor in the current changes in course provision and training for all citizenship teachers is a priority.
- Students interviewed were generally positive about citizenship, especially sixth formers who saw the content of their Year 11 short GCSE course as important as the qualification itself.
- Assessment of citizenship in Key Stage 3 is at an early stage of development; some good marking was seen in citizenship exercise books but sometimes comment on quite extended pieces of work was minimal.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall

- The curriculum is currently under review. There are plans to reinstate a discrete citizenship programme in Year 7 and a GCSE short course at Key Stage 4.
- Some subjects make a strong and tangible contribution to citizenship which students recognise. This includes RE and 'learning to learn' in particular, but English and geography also adopt citizenship objectives for units of their course, such as study of the media. Other subjects have documented links to citizenship but in general these are tangential and more needs to be done to ensure that these genuinely provide the cross-curricular dimension that the school seeks to achieve, particularly in the years where there is no core curriculum.
- Additionally the curriculum is augmented by occasional events such as the challenge day; sessions observed were interesting to students although in some more could have been done to promote active learning.
- The school involves students in planning for and carrying out charitable functions as well as some community events but there is scope for more community participation.
- The school council serves a productive function in communicating the views of students. At present it is not necessarily representative or democratic in the way students become council members and it would be beneficial for students to consider what rules are needed to make it a truly representative and accountable body.

Leadership and management of citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are satisfactory.

- The school has taken the introduction of citizenship seriously, adapting programmes in the light of evaluation.
- The subject leader is enthusiastic and has made use of local authority support and DCSF guidelines to inform provision.
- This year has seen a major change in the way citizenship is provided in the school and this has not yet produced a comprehensive programme; however there is good capacity to improve.

Subject issue: teaching and learning about Britain's diversity

- This is an area of relative strength with contributions observed in citizenship, RE, history and the 'challenge day'.
- Students develop their knowledge and understanding of the diversity of the UK.
- Students discuss and write about the circumstances of refugees and understand the role of international organisations in working with them.
- A unit on social harmony in RE deals explicitly with racism, prejudice, discrimination and the role of the media, with both citizenship and RE objectives.

Inclusion

- In the lessons observed, all students had opportunities to voice their opinions and share their ideas.
- Teachers in some lessons observed were attentive to the needs of individual students, but in other cases questioning could have been targeted more carefully.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- in the curriculum, developing core programmes so that there is depth and progression in students' experience of citizenship
- ensuring that leaders of those subjects making substantial cross curricular contributions to citizenship understand the intentions of the citizenship curriculum and in particular the relationship between the three strands
- developing assessment of achievement in citizenship
- identifying opportunities for training in leading and teaching citizenship.

ICT

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be inadequate.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall.

- All students are entered for an ICT qualification during Key Stage 4 and the results are carefully evaluated against each individual's predicted grades. This shows that progress is satisfactory and the standards reached are broadly average. Students' achievements in the use of ICT in other subjects are not assessed or evaluated.
- Students are taught about the problems they may encounter whilst using the internet and are aware of how to keep themselves safe whilst online.
- Younger students' attitudes to learning are good. They work together well in small groups and are engaged by the tasks they are given. However, older students say that poor behaviour by a minority of the class regularly impedes their learning. In several classes visited a significant number of students were off-task. A check of the work completed this year by this group showed that very little had been accomplished.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

Teaching and learning are inadequate.

- Teachers are skilled personal users of ICT.
- Much work in ICT requires students to complete tightly structured tasks. These tasks often consolidate ICT skills that students have already mastered and so the rate at which they learn new skills is relatively slow. Students are not challenged by the tasks they are given.
- Students say tasks are not well explained. They would like more guidance on how they can improve their use of software applications.
- Most students in Key Stage 4 apply themselves well to the coursework tasks they are required to complete, often drawing on their prior learning, so achieving satisfactorily.
- Subject leaders have well developed plans for using ICT to improve learning in their areas. However, there are insufficient resources to meet demand which is hampering implementation.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- All students except those in the sixth form have timetabled ICT lessons taught by subject specialists. Students are encouraged to apply the skills they have acquired when working in other subjects.
- Sixth form students who are not studying ICT qualifications have the opportunity to develop their use of ICT in other subjects. However, the school does not monitor these students' ICT experiences nor evaluate the outcomes.
- The curriculum meets statutory requirements although barely so for two elements. The principles of data logging are taught in ICT lessons but a lack of data logging sensors and devices means that students do not have the opportunity to try out these practical techniques when working in other subjects such as geography and science. Control

technology is mostly taught by the design technology team but again, a lack of equipment limits what can be achieved.

- The school's response to changes made nationally to the specifications of ICT qualifications has resulted in turbulence in students' experiences of ICT and the ICT team is still consolidating curriculum planning for this age group.
- Significant funding received to support the school's science specialist status is invested in developing the ICT infrastructure and resources. Much of this investment is eaten up in replacing defunct hardware which limits the school's aspirations for increasing the ICT resources available for students to use in subject areas.

Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- There is a clear vision for the use of ICT in supporting learning in other subjects. Subject leaders are frustrated by a lack of resources.
- The limited ICT resources the school does have are well managed. However the planned budget allocation for next year will only allow the school to sustain its present provision and make modest expansions in other subject areas. Current levels of investment in ICT do not allow the school to fully realise its vision for this core skill.
- Good use is made of ICT in managing information held by the school. All staff have their own laptops which means each student's progress can be efficiently tracked in each subject and the overall picture collated by the school.
- Evaluation of the quality and impact of provision is informal and conducted through discussion at meetings. The school recognises that this needs to be more systematic to better inform clear identification of priorities for improvement.

Subject Issue: use of assessment

- The quality of assessment is better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4 because the courses for younger students have been longer established. At Key Stage 3 students are aware of their current levels of attainment and have good guidance on how they can improve their work. Older students are less clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- The head of ICT has begun to liaise with primary schools over collecting information about students' prior attainment before they transfer to Cardinal Griffin. This is in the early stages and currently the department does not evaluate attainment on entry.
- Subject reports to parents contain a statement about the use of ICT in that subject. However, their achievements in ICT are not assessed, meaning the school is unaware of how well students apply the skills they have been taught in ICT lessons elsewhere.

Inclusion

- The school has made informal attempts to establish which individual students are without access to ICT at home. Lunchtime access to the school's computer facilities is made available in an attempt to ensure this group is not disadvantaged. Without systematic monitoring the school cannot be sure it has succeeded in this.
- Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make the same satisfactory progress as other students do.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising achievement in ICT by improving the behaviour of some older students and by developing more challenging tasks
- evaluating ICT provision systematically to prioritise areas for development
- evaluating attainment on entry in ICT so that teachers are aware of what students are capable of before they have joined the school
- assessing achievement in ICT where it is used in other subjects
- increasing the ICT resources available for students to use in other subject areas.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop citizenship and 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

Scott Harrison
Her Majesty's Inspector