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Dear Sister Ann Marie

Ofsted survey inspection programme – ICT

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11-12 March 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of nine lessons and sampling of the school's ICT network.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall.

- Students enter the school with average ICT skills. Most make satisfactory progress achieving average standards at the end of Key Stage 3 and where they take a qualification, at Key Stage 4. However, more able pupils are sometimes insufficiently challenged and at Key Stage 4 less able pupils do not always meet their targets.
- Students in the sixth form take an applied ICT course and achieve as expected. School data shows that students in Years 11 and 12 are

mostly meeting their targets and results in public examinations expected to improve over previous years.

- Students are enthusiastic and confident ICT users. Good teaching of skills equips them to use ICT in other subjects to research, present and analyse information. They have a good understanding about safe internet use.
- In lessons and when working independently, students concentrate well and show very positive attitudes. Their behaviour is good and they are eager to talk about their work and share their knowledge. Students make mature comments and work extremely well together when they have opportunities for peer evaluation and collaborative projects.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers have good knowledge and enthusiasm for ICT. Lessons catch students' interest because the pace is brisk and topics are rooted in the real world.
- Good opportunities are made to allow students to develop skills to research, present information and evaluate the effectiveness of what they do. Teachers give students helpful support to develop their skills and clarify understanding.
- All students have individual folders on the school's network to save their work. Teachers assess their progress and give them targets, but younger students are unclear about what they have to do to reach them. For students taking examinations practice is better because examination grade criteria are used to show them what they should do to improve. This has a positive impact on their progress.
- Across the curriculum, teachers make regular use of the computer rooms to enhance learning. This is supported by increasing use of computer whiteboards to present lessons and in many subjects the use of specialist software. Practice though is inconsistent and there is no means to track students' use of ICT across the curriculum.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The quality of the curriculum is inadequate.

- At Key Stage 3 all students follow a new lively topic based programme planned to meet National Curriculum requirements. At Key Stage 4 about half of the students take an examination course but no provision is made for the others. This means provision does not meet statutory requirements to provide a planned programme of study for all students.
- Most subjects plan to use ICT to enhance learning but this is not audited to check links to the ICT curriculum or the students' capability. In turn some ICT use is undemanding and opportunities missed for teachers and students to develop skills and make the most effective use of ICT.

- Sixth form students not taking ICT qualifications use it in other subjects and for independent work. However, this experience is not monitored.

Leadership and management of ICT

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

- The subject leader and technical support team have a clear vision to develop ICT and manage resources well, which is shared with the school's senior leadership. This is beginning to impact positively on school development recent implementation of a new network that has improved communications and tracking students' targets.
- Self-evaluation is accurate, although much is informal and the school acknowledges too little is done to monitor ICT use across the curriculum. The subject leader has good idea of what is required to improve the provision and use of ICT in other subjects. However, written plans are at an early stage and make too little reference to when actions will be in place and their impact evaluated.
- Effective training and development has resulted in staff enthusiastic to use ICT to enrich learning. They are keen to develop the school's new virtual learning environment. Teachers use the school network well for communication, target tracking and students' pastoral support.
- The school's specialist status has improved ICT provision in languages with a class ICT suite. This is increasingly made available when not required for language teaching to other subjects to use to enhance learning.

Use of Assessment

Assessment in ICT is satisfactory

- There is no formal assessment of students' capability when they start school, but teachers regularly assess their subsequent work using the National Curriculum or examination criteria. Outcomes inform their annual targets that are recorded in a new school-wide system together with those in other subjects. Teachers give students clear feedback in lessons but each teacher records the outcomes of their assessment differently. This gives an inconsistent view of the progress students make to develop skills over time. In turn, younger students are unclear about what they have to do to improve their work and targets are sometimes insufficiently challenging.
- Other than at Key Stage 3 or for those students' taking ICT qualifications, their achievement is not assessed. This means that the school does not know how well students apply their skills across the curriculum.

Inclusion

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

- Liaison between staff and the ready availability of information about students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities means that they are supported well in lessons and progress is similar to their peers. Where needed, additional equipment or software is provided.
- Students have good access to computers before and after school in two well-equipped learning resource centres.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving provision at Key Stage 4 to meet statutory requirements
- developing consistent assessment to monitor students' achievement in ICT and its use in other subjects
- monitoring the use of ICT across the curriculum.

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

Michael Haynes
Additional Inspector