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Miss H Jackson
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Jackson

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in information and communication technology (ICT)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on the 14 July 2008.

The visit provided valuable information about assessment in ICT, 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included discussions with you, some of your staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and a joint lesson observation.

Features of good practice observed

- The head of department for ICT has made good use of assessment data to set challenging targets, identify gaps in students' learning and raise standards in ICT, especially at Key Stage 4, where results have risen from 30% A*-C grades in 2005 to 89% in 2007.
- When students arrive in Year 7, they complete an on-line test to assess their attainment in ICT on entry to the school. This helps to ensure they are provided with work, which is suitably challenging as soon as possible.
- All formal assessments are done on line and students receive one interim and one full report about how well they are progressing in ICT every year.
- The progress that students make towards their targets is reviewed every half term; this enables the head of department to compare the performance of different groups of students and identify those students at

risk of underperforming. This is followed up with additional support for staff and students where required.

- All students at Key Stage 3 are able to track their own progress using grids on the back of their folders and set their own individual targets.
- Samples of students' work and how well these have been marked and levelled are moderated every term. This has resulted in some staff being challenged about work that has been levelled over generously.
- The head of department has worked hard with staff to help improve the quality of their marking. This has led to marking which is diagnostic and informs students of how they can improve.
- Students have noticed a significant improvement in the last three years in the quality of what they are taught in ICT; they appreciate knowing their levels of attainment and enjoy participating in peer assessment as well as the assessment of their own learning. However, they do not all know how to progress to the next level.
- The ICT department has developed good systems to track and monitor students' progress this has led to revisions being made to the ICT curriculum and programme of work.
- Assessment data have also revealed those strands in which students are doing particularly well and those, like control and data logging, which require some improvement.
- Assessment data is used well to support effective teaching, but does not compensate for weaknesses in teaching at Key Stage 3 by non-specialists for example in the structure and focus of lessons.
- Staff make effective use of mini hand held whiteboards during ICT based lessons to encourage students to be reflective learners and help teachers determine how well students are progressing.
- Some departments, for example Science, Dance and Drama, are making good use of ICT to support assessment strategies and raise standards. Students use ICT to film, evaluate and improve their performances.
- The development of e-portfolios enables staff and students to gain an overview of the quality and standard of students' work including work in other subjects in which ICT is used. This also helps to ensure there are no gaps in students' learning especially in ICT at Key Stage 4.
- Students benefit from being able to access their work from home and from their mobile phones especially when working on projects outside the school. This also assists them in completing homework and in their reviewing and improving work they have been doing in school. Students' work is marked on line, allowing parents to see the level of attainment and feedback from the teacher.
- The virtual learning environment (VLE) is beginning to be used by parents to help them access their children's work and become more involved in their children's learning. Well-received training sessions have been run for parents to help them use the school's VLE to support their own child's learning.
- The school is making effective use of the VLE to support systems for assessment and reporting.

Areas for development

- ensuring students know what they need to do to progress to the next level in ICT
- ensuring that staff who teach other subjects develop a more secure knowledge of students' ICT capabilities and skills so that more effective use of ICT can be made across the curriculum
- ensuring the quality of teaching of ICT by non-specialists is consistently good at Key Stage 3.

We discussed the need for the school to invest in additional hardware so that ICT can become more embedded across the curriculum.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop ICT in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier
Her Majesty's Inspector