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Dear Mr James

Ofsted survey inspection programme – information and communication technology (ICT)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 7 October 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement is good; standards are below average.

- Attainment on entry in ICT is arrived at from a careful analysis of pupils' performance against the early learning goals. It is well below average.
- Standards are improving but remain below average by the time pupils complete Key Stage 2. Considering their starting points, the progress pupils make is good.
- Pupils are highly motivated and speak excitedly about the opportunities they have to use ICT. They work well independently as well as in small groups, helping each other out when necessary.

- Pupils are aware of the need to keep themselves safe when using the internet and are able to explain how they do so.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use to good effect in preparing detailed lesson plans. Lessons are characterised by a strong focus on learning objectives with pupils being regularly reminded to review their progress against the objectives. This helps ensure pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn and motivates them to work at a good pace.
- Teachers have good classroom management skills which, combined with pupils' good attitudes to learning and the provision of engaging activities, ensure all stay on task throughout the lesson.
- Learning assistants support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities very effectively so that they make the same good progress as their peers. However, higher attaining pupils are set the same work to do as the rest of the class and are insufficiently challenged.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The use of ICT is planned in detail into the topics to be taught. This ensures ICT is well integrated into pupils' work in other subjects.
- All aspects of the National Curriculum for ICT are covered. Pupils enjoy for example learning the principles of computerised control through programming a life size model of a clown to perform a sequence of actions. However the range of opportunities provided for pupils is limited by a lack of some resources. There are insufficient peripherals such as digital cameras and microscopes and equipment for data logging which hinders achievement.
- The school has experienced a recent influx of pupils from other countries some of whom arrived at the school with no spoken English at all. Good use is made of specific software to engage these pupils and to support them in acquiring English. The software displays words and sentences and enables pupils to hear the correct pronunciation. ICT is used well in this context to supplement what pupils learn in their English lessons.

Leadership and management of ICT

Leadership and management are good.

- Self evaluation is systematic and rigorous. It informs strategic planning and the aspects of provision to be monitored in the future. The school has a very good grasp of its strengths and weaknesses with respect to ICT.

- Staff training needs have been audited and teachers and learning assistants supported in acquiring the necessary subject knowledge and skills.
- Procurement of ICT resources is extremely well managed and the ICT co-ordinator has been successful in negotiating some favourable discounts for the school. However, application of the other three principles of 'best value' are under developed. There is some informal consultation with pupils but systems for systematically consulting parents, pupils and the community about the ICT provision they would like to see are not in place. Similarly the school does not challenge why it provides the services it does nor benchmark the cost of its services with other schools.
- Strong and effective leadership has brought about a good improvement in ICT provision which is helping to raise standards in other subjects. There is a good capacity to continue to improve.

Use of Assessment

The use of assessment is good.

- At the end of every half-term pupils undertake a standardised set of assessments which are graded against the National Curriculum levels for ICT. Good moderation procedures are in place to check assessments made by different teachers are consistent. Some inconsistencies have been identified which the school is addressing.
- Assessments inform a system for tracking the individual progress of pupils. This enables teachers to see which pupils are meeting expectations, exceeding them or falling behind.
- When pupils use ICT in other subjects, the quality of their ICT work is not assessed. This means teachers are sometimes unaware of how well pupils are able to apply the ICT skills they have been taught in other contexts.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- providing more challenge for higher attaining pupils
- using the principles of best value to inform strategic planning and investment in ICT resources
- assessing pupils' use of ICT when working in other subjects.

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 Anstead
Her Majesty's Inspector