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Mr Gledhill
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Gledhill

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 16 - 17 September 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students'
work and observation of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement in ICT is satisfactory. Standards in ICT are above average.

- Students enter the school having reached standards which are above national expectations. This is because you provide ICT lessons to local primary schools for Year 6 pupils, and more recently to Year 5 pupils. These lessons are received well and mean that when students enter your school they have a good understanding of the main aspects of ICT, including programming.
- By the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 students reach standards which are above the national average. Given the standard of the students when

they enter the school this means that most make satisfactory progress in ICT and some make good progress.

- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well. You provide them with a Key Stage 4 ICT curriculum which meets their needs and interests and enables them to achieve a nationally recognised qualification. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the support given and the curriculum provided.
- ICT is also used well to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities across a range of subjects including mathematics and English.
- However, the more able students make less progress than other students.
- Most students behave well in ICT lessons. This is because they are engaged and enjoy the activities and tasks given. However in some lessons behaviour is satisfactory rather than good; this tends to be when the lesson does not meet the needs and interests of the students.
- Students are aware of what they need to do to keep safe when using new technologies. Awareness is raised through lessons, reinforcement happens through lessons, assemblies and outside speakers. Students apply their knowledge and understanding of how to keep safe to their day to day practice.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

Teaching and learning are good.

- Lessons are planned well.
- In the majority of lessons the activities and tasks planned relate well to the students' needs and interests. The work challenges the students to think and consider what they are doing and why.
- In some lessons ICT is used to develop the students' independent learning skills. Students are able to decide when they want to use ICT and what they want to use it for.
- However in some lessons students are asked to complete tasks which do not challenge them, this means they made less progress in the lesson than would be expected.
- When lessons are based on detailed knowledge of what standard the students are at, the students make better progress. Unfortunately in some lessons all students are expected to complete the same work which means some students do not make as much progress as they could.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The ICT curriculum is inadequate.

- The curriculum at Key Stage 4 does not meet statutory requirements and is therefore inadequate. This is because not all students have the opportunity to develop their skills in control.

- However you do provide a range of ICT courses at Key Stage 4 which means many of the needs and interests of the students are met. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well provided for with the opportunity to take entry level qualifications and nationally recognised GCSE equivalent courses. This enhances their future economic well-being.
- The department is developing the curriculum at Key Stage 3 given the national changes which come into effect from September 2008. However there is a lack of emphasis at Key Stage 3 on providing work which is matched to the needs and interests of all the students.

Leadership and management of ICT

The leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory.

- The department is aware of its strengths and weaknesses. You understand the need to improve the quality of assessment and ensure that students know and understand what they need to do to improve their work. There are good assessment procedures in the department but these are not consistently adopted by all members of staff.
- The development plan does accurately highlight the areas which the department needs to work on, however often the areas are linked to improving provision rather than specifically linking to improved outcomes for students.
- The school's specialist status is impacting on the provision of ICT equipment. This is improving the confidence and self-esteem of many of students, and especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- The specialism has also provided much appreciated, and well targeted, ICT training which is closing the technological gap between members of staff and the students.

Use of Assessment

The use of assessment in ICT is inadequate.

- At Key Stage 4 students know and understand their target grades and often what they need to do to achieve those grades. However there is much variability in the quality of feedback that students receive. Some is good, but much does not provide the students with the accurate and detailed information they would like and need.
- At Key Stage 3 the vast majority of students do not know what level they are working at. They do not know their target levels and they do not know what they need to do to achieve them. This is because the feedback they receive is mostly verbal and the students do not remember it. In a few cases they do not receive any feedback from the member of staff about their work except at parents' evenings and reports.
- The students use ICT in many subjects. However this ICT use is often not assessed and rarely is the information fed back to the ICT

department. This means the ICT department is not always aware of how well, and why, students have used ICT in school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that all Key Stage 3 students are aware of their target level, the level they are working at and what they need to do to reach their target
- providing a curriculum at Key Stage 4 which enables all students to access their statutory entitlement to the ICT National Curriculum
- developing the monitoring of work to ensure practice is consistently good
- ensuring that all students make at least good progress 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

Tanya Harber Stuart
Her Majesty's Inspector